

Nelson Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103237
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308259
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Johnny Lee
Headteacher	Michael Tromans
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2006
School address	King Edward's Road Ladywood Birmingham B1 2PJ
Telephone number	0121 4642201
Fax number	0121 4648726

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Most children enter the Nursery class with levels of skill that are low for their age, particularly in language and social development. Many of these children have low self esteem, poor attitudes to learning, and exhibit challenging behaviour. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average and a significant number of these are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The number of pupils who join or leave school, other than at the usual times, is high. The school was given a Notice to Improve at its last inspection in November 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with Section 13 (5) the education act 2005 HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is a satisfactory school that provides pupils with a very caring and friendly environment in which to learn. Parents are supportive of the school and are appreciative of the interesting and stimulating experiences provided for their children. One parental comment is typical of the views of others, 'I am happy with the school and my child is improving all the time in his education and his behaviour.'

Leadership and management have worked relentlessly to bring about improvement in the areas of significant weakness highlighted at the last inspection. This has proved successful and, as a result, teaching and learning, pupils' achievement, and the procedures for checking the progress that pupils make are now satisfactory. The headteacher, ably supported by his deputy, has been the driving force behind this improvement. He provides clear direction for the school and has forged a strong sense of teamwork amongst all involved in the work of the school. Some staff with leadership roles have supported the work of the headteacher and deputy but have tended to leave decisions to them rather than take responsibility themselves. The headteacher is rightly, keen to ensure that decision making is shared more widely and that leaders are more accountable for performance in their areas of responsibility.

Standards are below average by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement for pupils, when their low levels of skill on starting school are considered. Progress is satisfactory overall, though it is uneven between classes because pupils in some classes make better progress than in others. This stems from some teachers not always effectively using information about individual pupils' attainment to set work that is appropriately challenging. Pupils' performance in writing is a particular weakness. The school acknowledges that it does not place enough emphasis on improving pupils' skills in spelling, sentence structure and punctuation in order to raise standards in writing.

The pastoral care of pupils is good, with all staff being firmly committed to pupils' safety and well-being. Strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' social skills and the school has clear evidence to show this has a very positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour from when they start school. Parents are very pleased with the way the school looks after and cares for their children. The school works effectively with others, such as the school nurse and a variety of support agencies, to promote the well-being of all pupils.

Pupils behave well, enjoy coming to school and show positive attitudes to their learning. This has a positive effect on the progress they make. Teaching assistants provide good support for all pupils, especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, along with those at an early stage of learning English. A broad range of enrichment activities effectively extends the curriculum. These include a variety of out of school clubs and visits to places of educational interest. Pupils work with a variety of visitors, such as professional sports coaches and musicians, to develop further their skills across a range of subjects.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory. There are sound procedures for introducing children to school and, because of this, they quickly settle into everyday routines.

Staff provide activities that are practical and based upon children's personal experiences and so capture their interest and enthusiasm. The strong emphasis on promoting children's personal, emotional and social skills, which are poor on entry, enables them to make good progress in this area of learning. As a result, children behave well and are happy to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups. The nature of the outdoor area means it cannot be used continually, especially during inclement weather, as a means of effectively developing children's skills across the areas of learning. The procedures for checking the progress that children make have recently been improved and are now satisfactory. Parents are kept fully informed of the progress their children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' skills in spelling, sentence structure and punctuation to raise standards in writing.
- Enable all pupils to make at least good progress by ensuring they are always given work that effectively challenges them.
- Develop the role of senior and middle leaders so they are more accountable for performance in their areas of responsibility.

A small proportion of schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards by the end of Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science. However, this represents satisfactory achievement from the low starting points of children on entry to the school. Satisfactory progress is made in most areas of learning in the Nursery and Reception classes, apart from in personal, social and emotional development, in which it is good. The progress of pupils in Years 1 to 6 has improved over the last year and, although uneven between classes, is now satisfactory overall. An increasing number of pupils are now making good progress. In recent years, girls have performed considerably better than boys in English, mathematics and science. Over the last year, the school has introduced a variety of initiatives to improve the progress of boys. These are proving to be successful and the gap in the performance of boys and girls is narrowing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are polite and show care and consideration for others. They are willing to take on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council. In so doing, they make a positive contribution to the school community. They also contribute well to the wider community, as is shown in the way they make collections at harvest time and donate them to local sheltered housing. Pupils know how to stay safe and they move responsibly around the school and in the playground during break times. They have a good awareness of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. This is shown in the way they make healthy choices from the lunchtime menu and their involvement in the out of school sporting clubs. Pupils are prepared in a satisfactory manner for their future lives. Although their basic skills in literacy and numeracy are below average, they are improving and pupils' achievement is satisfactory in these areas.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage lessons well and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which is important, as a significant minority of pupils have behavioural difficulties. Consequently, classrooms are calm and friendly places in which to learn and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The learning objectives for lessons are effectively shared with pupils so they are clear about what they are to learn and how to set about their tasks. There is too much teacher direction at times and this hinders pupils' development as independent learners. Progress is uneven throughout the school because, in some classes, pupils are not always effectively challenged, being given work that is too easy or too hard. Pupils are keen to learn and work well collaboratively in pairs and small groups. They say they particularly enjoy lessons when they are practical, such as when they carry out investigations in science.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has an appropriate balance between promoting pupils' academic and creative skills. It has recently been modified to meet better the needs of boys and so improve their performance, which was lagging behind that of girls. For example, planning now places greater emphasis on providing a visual stimulus during introductions to lessons and practical activities to better engage boys in their learning. Planning has also been improved to ensure a smoother transition for children from the Reception class to Year 1. This is having a positive impact on the progress they make, especially in their literacy skills. There are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills during lessons. There are also limited opportunities for pupils to practise and refine their skills in information and communication technology in other subjects. The curriculum is enlivened by a variety of initiatives, such as by pupils in Years 3 to 6 being taught Spanish.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are secure safeguarding procedures in place to ensure pupils' health and safety. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school with one commenting, 'We know we can talk to a member of staff if we have any worries and they will help us sort it out.' The recently developed nurture area provides a quiet environment in which pupils who are experiencing emotional upsets go to calm down. There are strong links with outside agencies to provide extra support to individual pupils when needed. The procedures for checking pupils' attainment and progress have been much improved since the last inspection. As a result, the school is able to identify and provide extra support at an early stage if any pupil is not making sufficient progress. The information collected about pupils' attainment is not always used effectively by teachers to set work that provides suitable challenges for pupils of different abilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and has enabled the school to identify and prioritise the correct areas for development. These include raising standards, especially in writing, and improving the consistency of teaching and learning between classes. There are good procedures in place to help the many pupils who join school during the year to settle in quickly. Decisive action has been taken to improve the low rate of attendance and the poor behaviour of a significant minority of pupils that have been evident in recent years. This has proved successful and attendance is now broadly average and behaviour greatly improved. Governors are very supportive but are not fully involved in holding the school to account and in promoting school improvement. The school's recent track record shows it has sound capacity to make any necessary changes to improve its performance further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nelson Junior and Infant School, Ladywood B1 2PJ.

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. We would like to tell you that we consider your school has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. It helps you to achieve in a satisfactory way, although standards by the end of Year 6 are below average in English, mathematics and science. Most of you now make satisfactory progress and an increasing number make good progress.

What we liked most about your school.

- You behave well and are kind and considerate to others.
- All adults take very good care of you and ensure you are safe while in school.
- You have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and keep safe.
- The curriculum gives you many interesting opportunities to extend your learning, such as by learning Spanish.
- You enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn.
- The people in charge of the school are working hard to make it even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- Improve your skills in writing to help you reach better standards in English.
- Make sure all of you make good progress by always giving you work that makes you think hard.
- Ensure that all people with leadership responsibilities are fully involved in helping the school to improve further.

A special word of thanks to the members of the school council who showed us around the school at the start of the inspection. The school is right to be proud of you.

We hope you keep enjoying your work and remain kind and friendly to everyone you meet.

Best wishes.

Melvyn Hemmings Lead inspector

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