

St Benedict's Infant School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 103261 |
| Local Authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 308267 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 November 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Terry Elston |

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 544 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 16 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Roger Hale |
| Headteacher | Jo Barr |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 January 2005 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | St Benedict's Road Birmingham B10 9DP |
| Telephone number | 01214 646420 |
| Fax number | 01217 736485 |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large school with a high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Bengali, Punjabi and Urdu are the most common mother tongues. Around 10% of pupils are from families that are refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above that of most schools, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with skills that are very low, compared with most schools. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007 and the deputy headteacher in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school at the heart of the community. The excellent partnership with parents, including the extensive family learning programmes, is a key factor in the school's success and pupils' good achievements. Pupils build well on their good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and, by the end of Year 2, attain standards that are close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' very strong focus on developing pupils' language skills means that they make rapid progress in their use and understanding of English. Pupils enjoy school and get on really well with those from different ethnic backgrounds. They have high expectations of themselves, and see the importance of doing well at school.

Pupils say that the activities planned for them are 'fun' and 'interesting.' The curriculum is a good balance between work to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills and opportunities to encourage their artistic talents. Their work in art and design, for example, is stunning. The curriculum also provides much to teach pupils about how to look after their health, and they speak knowledgeably about the need to eat the right foods and keep fit. They take part enthusiastically in the wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school that enhance their skills in subjects such as information and communication technology (ICT), dance and music. They enjoy the after school club, where the staff care for them well and provide them with interesting activities.

Parents are full of enthusiasm for the good teaching that helps their children learn so quickly. A number of parents commented on 'teachers doing a great job'. Teachers build very strong relationships with pupils, helping to make this a happy school. They are very good at explaining things clearly, so that pupils grasp new ideas quickly. They make the rules and expectations clear so that pupils behave well and know to put their hands up to answer questions. Occasionally, however, some teachers focus too much of their attention on one group of pupils and the others lose track of what they are supposed to do.

A strength of the school is in the good quality of the care, support and guidance offered by all adults. Pupils who are new to the school or Children's Centre benefit from lots of help that enables them to settle quickly and feel safe and valued. In the playground, the staff play with them with great enthusiasm, and support them if they have a problem. The school provides well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are fully included in all activities.

As a result of the good leadership and management, the school has improved significantly since the last inspection and is well set to do even better. The headteacher has made a good start in her first year, and is highly respected by parents, staff and pupils. The headteacher is supported well by other leaders who all play an important part in building on the school's strengths and rectifying its weaknesses. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They take a keen interest in the school and are not afraid to hold the leaders to account. The Children's Centre is a valuable asset to the school and provides a safe and stimulating place for children to learn and play. The staff of the centre have acted well on the recommendations following the previous inspection and all statutory requirements are met.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the EYFS is good. Children love school because learning is fun. Parents speak highly of the way their children are prepared for school and how quickly they settle. 'A great

start to school,' said one parent. As a result of the good teaching and language support, children make good progress. However, by the end of the Reception year, most are working at levels below those typical of children their ages. They enjoy their learning and cooperate well with one another. They learn how to take care of themselves and grow in confidence. Their language progresses very well because of the strong focus on speaking, listening and early reading skills in both the Nursery and Reception classes.

The teachers and teaching assistants make an effective team and lessons are a good balance between work, play and opportunities for pupils to explore things for themselves. Teachers make lessons interesting, but do not always plan to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities in the class. This means that occasionally some children find the work easy, while others struggle to keep up. Adults provide good levels of care so that children feel safe and valued. The staff make regular assessments of their progress, and these provide accurate measures of their strengths and weaknesses. The curriculum is planned well to give children a broad range of opportunities to develop their academic skills and personal qualities. The good leadership and management help improve the provision further through staff training and regular evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring that teachers check on the progress of all groups of pupils in lessons.
- Provide work in the EYFS that meets the learning needs of all children, whatever their ability.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from their very low starting points to attain standards that are broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Standards are rising year by year, and particularly so in mathematics, which has been the focus for improvement. Progress in speaking and listening is very good and, while standards are still below average by Year 2, most pupils speak confidently in English as well as in their mother tongue. Pupils at an early stage of learning English benefit from valuable support from bilingual staff that enables them to take a full part in lessons.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. They are supported well in class and make particularly good progress in reading where most attain national standards by the time they leave.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development makes an important contribution to their learning. They care passionately about the environment, and the Eco Committee leads the way by raising other pupils' awareness of the need to recycle waste, keep the school free from litter and suggest how it could use energy more efficiently. They are rightly proud to have attained the Gold Eco-School Standard. Pupils have a very good awareness of different cultures of the world and those represented in the local area. They develop a very clear sense of right and wrong but, while behaviour is good, a few pupils need constant reminders to get on with their work. They enjoy school and most attend regularly. There is fierce competition to be the class with the fewest absences. Pupils feel safe and have the confidence to talk to adults about their problems.

They explain knowledgeably about how to live healthy lifestyles and say how much they enjoy the nutritious food prepared at lunchtime. Pupils are involved extensively in the local community and enjoyed working with a local television station in an item about the importance of good manners. Pupils feel well prepared for the future by taking responsibility readily, working together on projects and improving their language, numeracy and ICT skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy their work because teachers make learning fun by their lively teaching methods and imaginative use of resources. They are confident using the interactive whiteboards and these fascinate pupils while enabling them to learn quickly. For example, one group made rapid progress and had great fun when learning about fractions by 'dragging' butterflies and leaves into four containers on the large screen. Teachers explain new work clearly and are very good at encouraging pupils to use their language skills to explain what they are doing. They provide a good balance of whole-class teaching and group work tailored to pupils' abilities, and this generally ensures that all groups learn quickly. On a few occasions, the teacher becomes too engrossed in one group and the other groups let their attention wander. The good assessment systems provide a clear picture of pupils' progress and what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and detailed, helping pupils build well on the skills they have learned before. The good focus on developing their basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills helps them achieve well in all subjects. The curriculum is rich in opportunities to develop pupils' language skills, with lots of provision for pupils to discuss issues and use drama to act out situations. The ability sets for literacy and numeracy generally work well, and give pupils work that is well matched to their capabilities. However, the school recognises that less able pupils would benefit from spending more time working alongside those with more highly developed skills. The well planned personal, social, health and citizenship programme plays an important part in helping pupils understand the need to live healthy lives and stay safe. It also promotes community cohesion by helping pupils explore the richness of the different cultures in the school and further afield. A wide range of visits and visitors make topics come to life. There is a wide range of popular activities at lunchtime and after school that enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's provision and work with other agencies are very successful in meeting the needs of the significant number of pupils at an early stage of learning English. Many staff are able to talk to pupils in their mother tongue, so pupils grow in confidence and make good progress. For example, one pupil was asked to say how a piece of material felt and, after discussing it with his helper, beamed with pride when describing it as 'soft' in English and Urdu. Provision for looked after and vulnerable children, including those who are refugees, is outstanding and is valued highly by parents and carers. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are rigorous. Risk assessments are carried out on a regular basis and, as a result, pupils learn in a safe and

secure environment. Procedures for improving attendance are effective. Rates have increased steadily since the last inspection to just below the national average.

The school has good procedures for tracking and analysing pupils' progress. These enable staff to provide effective support to groups or individuals who are falling behind.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has quickly gained a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has created effective teams to raise standards. The roles of staff are clear, and self-evaluation by leaders at all levels is thorough. This enables senior staff to see where improvements have to be made and how they will be achieved. For example, when standards in mathematics were found to be a weakness in the 2007 assessments, the school improved the teaching and provided pupils with more opportunities to understand the language of mathematics. This worked well, and standards improved significantly. The school's enthusiastic support of parents' learning is an important way that the school forges strong links with the community and enables parents to help with their children's work. The governing body is well informed and takes a keen interest in the school. Governors visit the school often so that they have an in-depth awareness of its effectiveness.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 2 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 |
| The extent to which 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

Leadership and management

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|--|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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 |

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Benedict's Infant School, Small Heath, BB10 9DP

Thank you for your valuable help in the recent inspection of your school. The inspectors were very impressed with the way you spoke so confidently to us and told us so much about your school. You think yours is a good school and we agree!

What we found out about your school.

-
- You work hard and make good progress, especially in speaking, reading, writing and mathematics. The standard of your work is similar to that of most schools.
- You enjoy school, and most of you attend regularly.
- You have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers do a good job. They are kind to you and make lessons fun.
- You enjoy the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- You behave well, both in class and around the school, and enjoy taking responsibility.
- The staff and governors run the school well and know how to make improvements.
- All the adults take good care of you and are always there if you need help.

What we would like the school to do now.

- Help you to do even better by making sure that, when the teacher is working with one group, the others are working just as hard. You can help by getting on with your work when your teacher is teaching another group.
- Make sure that the youngest children are given work to do that matches their abilities.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Terry Elston

Lead inspector