

Stechford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103262
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308268
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Ambler
Headteacher	Armine Williams
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2003
School address	Albert Road Stechford Birmingham B33 8SJ
Telephone number	01214 643245
Fax number	01214 649806

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Inspection number	308268

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This primary school is larger than average and serves an inner city area of Birmingham. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. Most pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, the large majority of whom are of Pakistani origin. Only a small minority of pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. Many more pupils leave or join the school part way through their education than is the case nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Stechford is a good and improving school, something that is well understood and appreciated by parents. Pupils achieve well, and standards are now average by the end of Year 6. The secret of the school's accomplishment in raising standards lies in its success in tackling barriers to learning, most notably pupils' very weak language skills, by targeting its support where it will provide the greatest benefits. From the moment children enter the outstanding Foundation Stage they are bombarded with activities that help them make rapid gains in learning English. This equips them with the basic skills needed to make excellent progress in all areas of learning, so they are very well prepared for life in the main school. Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics through Years 1 to 6, because the good curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to improve their basic skills. Progress in science is slower, and standards are below average, because the pupils are not given enough practice in carrying out and recording investigations.

Improvements are also obvious in the rate of pupils' personal development, which is now good. Attendance is satisfactory and much higher than in 2006, and it continues to rise. Many parents comment on how happy their children are at school. Pupils like coming to school so much because they have lots of friends and the teaching is good. They love the challenging tasks they are given, and always behave well and try to do their best. Teachers plan lessons well to meet the needs of groups of pupils of differing abilities, but tasks are not always so well matched to an individual within a group, despite good assessment in lessons that tells teachers exactly which pupils need harder or easier work to do. The good care, guidance and support available to pupils ensure they feel really safe and well looked after. The work of the learning mentor has ensured good links with parents, who fully support the school's work to raise attendance. Parents are also able to play a good role in helping their children academically, because pupils' targets are explained to them and frequently updated.

The good leadership and management are very well focused on improving standards across the school, and clearly have the skills necessary to take the school to the next level. Targets are challenging, and are being met. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear and accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses, and know exactly what to do to bring about further improvements. They are well supported by governors, and by middle managers who demonstrate the same skills in identifying weaknesses and tackling them in their own subjects. The exception is in science, where priorities are not firmly based on an analysis of standards and achievement or checks on what the school provides.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding, because of the excellent leadership and management that targets provision at exactly the right places to gain the maximum benefit for the children. Excellent teaching, a language-rich curriculum and a hugely stimulating environment enable the children to make outstanding progress. Children enter the Nursery with very low skill levels, particularly in speech and language. From the moment they start, they are given every opportunity to develop their communication skills, which helps them make rapid gains in other areas of learning. The majority move to a different school for the Reception year, so around half of the children in Reception are new to the school, and have weaker skills than those who have left. The excellent focus on language development continues, with lots

of extra staff and parent helpers, so standards are now slightly above average by the time they start Year 1. All children understand their challenging targets, because they are fully involved in deciding what they should be, and what they need to learn to do next. The exciting environment and clear routines support the children's outstanding personal development, especially their independence and impeccable behaviour.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science by providing pupils with more opportunities to carry out and record all aspects of investigations in Years 3 to 6, and by addressing any weaknesses identified through monitoring.
- Ensure teachers use the knowledge they gain from in-class assessments to modify the tasks given to individual pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are improving in all year groups. Achievement too is improving, so although standards are currently above average at the end of the Foundation Stage, they have been significantly lower in the past. Much of the pupils' good progress further up the school can be traced back to the outstanding achievement in the Foundation Stage, where weaknesses in language are tackled as early as possible. Standards in Year 2 are now average in English, mathematics and science. This is a big improvement on the previous year and reflects the good, and much improved, achievement across Years 1 and 2, as these pupils started Year 1 with standards that were below average. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make particularly good progress, so the number requiring extra support falls significantly, to the point where very few have any language difficulties by the time they start Year 3. Many Pakistani pupils, especially girls, reach higher standards than others.

Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 3 to 6. Current standards are average in Year 6, and much higher than 2007. These pupils started Year 3 with standards that were below average. Progress is good in English and mathematics, where standards are improved from below average to average. In science, where achievement is satisfactory, standards remain below average by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, make equally as good progress as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils get on very well with each other and their staff. They are eager to come to school and one typical pupil commented 'it's brill, I like coming here!' Attendance is satisfactory, but has improved significantly since 2006, and continues to do so. Pupils are keen to do well and appreciate the rewards and praise they receive. They feel really safe and are confident that they can turn to members of staff or other pupils if they have problems. Pupils have a good understanding of how to eat and live healthily. They participate enthusiastically in a good range of physical activities such as the exciting early morning 'Wake up, Shake up' sessions, which are attended by almost every pupil. The school council is pleased about the good role it plays in shaping decisions in school, while others are proud of their fund raising activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are quick to take responsibility, for example as mediators, who are very successful in helping their peers to deal with any disagreements. The opportunity for pupils in Years 5 and 6 to experience work through the

'Ambassadors scheme', together with their good development of basic skills, prepares them well for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve and set them challenging targets. Different, but equally as demanding, tasks are given to pupils of higher, middle and lower ability. This means that the work is matched well to the needs of small groups, but this is not always the case for individuals within the groups. Pupils' progress is checked well, by carefully targeted questions or good use of resources such as individual whiteboards with which pupils can show the teacher their answers. This allows teachers to identify accurately which individuals are grasping the idea quickly and which need more help. However, the tasks are not always then changed to ensure that pupils who complete them early receive more difficult work, or those who are struggling are given easier tasks.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well focused on improving pupils' basic skills. The focus starts in the Foundation Stage where there is an excellent balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. In other years, literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced very well through subjects such as geography and history, which help pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. There is a good focus on learning new facts in science, but in Years 3 to 6 this is not balanced with enough recorded investigative work, so pupils' progress is slower than in English and mathematics. There are lots of extra activities. Pupils study French each week, for example, and there is a wide range of trips, activities and residential experiences that promotes pupils' personal development well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff have a good knowledge of pupils' social and emotional needs, and ensure that pupils are kept safe. Child protection procedures are meticulous and health and safety checks are carried out to the letter. The work of the learning mentor has been fundamental in improving attendance. The parents of all absentees are telephoned as soon as registers close, and all those whose children's attendance falls below 94% receive extra support. Support for those who are at an early stage of learning English is extensive and put into place as soon as a need is apparent. The school makes good use of outside agencies to support pupils, especially those with a statement of special educational need. The school has good systems for tracking pupils' progress, and uses it well to set challenging targets, especially in English and mathematics. However, information is not used well enough in science to maximise progress and to help pupils understand how they can make their work better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected, because data are analysed well to clearly identify which aspects of the school's provision, if improved, will have the biggest impact on standards. The actions taken have proved highly successful, so pupils are making faster progress in all years. A wide range of checks are carried out to ensure improvements are being implemented. The headteacher, for example, visits every class each week, as well as checking teachers' planning and pupils' books. Subject coordinators have drawn up their own plans that clearly target areas of weakness, except in science where deficiencies in standards and provision have not been identified. Governors play a good role in supporting the school, and have turned a large deficit budget into a small surplus through careful financial control.

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

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

Overall effectiveness

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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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 disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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

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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children

Inspection of Stechford Primary School, Birmingham, B33 8SJ

Thank you very much for helping us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time at your school, because you were so friendly. You told us that you enjoy coming to school, and we can see why. You go to a good school where all the grown ups take good care of you and help you to do well. You are learning lots of new things and making good progress in English and mathematics. This is because the people who run the school have found out exactly what to do to help you learn as quickly as possible. They know that many of you struggle with English when you first start school, so they give you lots of help in learning English and this helps the youngest ones get off to a fantastic start. You could still do a bit better in science, so we have asked the teachers to use all the information they have to write some plans to improve your work in science, and in particular, give you more experiments to do.

You also told us that you like doing difficult work that really makes you think hard. Your teachers are good at putting you in the right groups and then giving each group a task that is right for them. Sometimes, one or two of you in a group may find the task a bit too easy or hard, so we have asked them to give you a different one if this happens. We were impressed by how hard you work in lessons, and how well behaved you are around school. It was great to see so many of you arriving early for 'wake up, shake up' so you can be fit and ready to start the day. More and more of you are coming to school every day, but there are still a few who could do better. So, come on, make sure everybody comes to school whenever they can.

The people who run the school are doing a good job. They are making sure that the school gets better and better every year. You are helping as well. The work you do on the school council or acting as mediators helps make the school a better place for everyone.

With all best wishes for your futures.

David Driscoll Lead inspector



3 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Stechford Primary School, Birmingham, B33 8SJ

Thank you very much for helping us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time at your school, because you were so friendly. You told us that you enjoy coming to school, and we can see why. You go to a good school where all the grown ups take good care of you and help you to do well. You are learning lots of new things and making good progress in English and mathematics. This is because the people who run the school have found out exactly what to do to help you learn as quickly as possible. They know that many of you struggle with English when you first start school, so they give you lots of help in learning English and this helps the youngest ones get off to a fantastic start. You could still do a bit better in science, so we have asked the teachers to use all the information they have to write some plans to improve your work in science, and in particular, give you more experiments to do.

You also told us that you like doing difficult work that really makes you think hard. Your teachers are good at putting you in the right groups and then giving each group a task that is right for them. Sometimes, one or two of you in a group may find the task a bit too easy or hard, so we have asked them to give you a different one if this happens. We were impressed by how hard you work in lessons, and how well behaved you are around school. It was great to see so many of you arriving early for 'wake up, shake up' so you can be fit and ready to start the day. More and more of you are coming to school every day, but there are still a few who could do better. So, come on, make sure everybody comes to school whenever they can.

The people who run the school are doing a good job. They are making sure that the school gets better and better every year. You are helping as well. The work you do on the school council or acting as mediators helps make the school a better place for everyone.

With all best wishes for your futures.

David Driscoll
Lead inspector