

Kingsthorne Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103368
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308294
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Field

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	338
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	87
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Smith
Headteacher	Joyce Ludlow
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	Cranbourne Road Kingstanding Birmingham B44 0BX
Telephone number	0121 6753897
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Kingsthorne is an average sized primary school with an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of one Nursery and two Reception classes. The majority of children start Nursery with well below average levels of skills and knowledge for their age. Most pupils live locally in an area where some families experience considerable hardship. A well above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most primary schools. A few speak English as an additional language but none is at an early stage of English language acquisition. An average proportion of pupils have assessed moderate learning difficulties. A small number has registered disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvements are required in relation to provision and pupils' achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 2.

National validated data shows that the value the school adds to pupils' education in English and mathematics has been declining since the time of the last inspection. Provisional results in Year 6 in 2008 show a significant improvement in English because of the school's effective strategies to raise achievement. Results in mathematics show only a slight improvement and remain well below the national average. Overall standards are below average in English and well below average in mathematics. The school has identified that a significant proportion of pupils in Key Stage 2 have gaps in their mathematical knowledge and skills development and so teachers are having to take short-term action to plug the gaps to ensure that pupils build secure numeracy skills. Whilst there is evidence of an increasing proportion of effective teaching, there is not enough good teaching to ensure that all pupils make up lost ground in mathematics.

There is insufficient use of challenging targets to assist better progress in mathematics in all but Year 6, where exceptionally demanding targets have been set that reflect the slow progress made by some pupils previously. There is positive impact on pupils' progress in writing and reading as a result of the school's well-targeted action and effective provision. However, the pupils' progress, achievement and the school's overall effectiveness are judged as inadequate because a significant proportion of pupils in Key Stage 2 do not make good enough progress to reach the standards of which they are capable in mathematics.

The headteacher has managed a period of significant staff change since the time of the last inspection so that pupils continue to benefit from the calm and purposeful ethos so evident to the visitor to school. Pastorally, the school is doing a very good job in assisting pupils, many of whom have significant personal needs, to attend school regularly, grow into responsible young people who behave well and build a strong moral code by which to live. The arrangements for child protection are rigorous and all safeguarding requirements are met. The curriculum is satisfactory, with excellent links with the community and external services that enhance learners' well-being. The growing home-school partnership with parents is a positive feature in supporting pupils' education, whilst the many courses on offer are enabling adults to extend their education and receive accreditation. Pupils spoke to inspectors with real pleasure about the many things they like about Kingsthorne, and in particular how nice their teachers are and how well looked after and safe they feel in school.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but inadequate in mathematics in some years in Key Stage 2. Good teaching and learning are reflected in the picture of good achievement in the EYFS and in Years 1, 2 and 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and the small number of pupils with disabilities now learn and progress soundly because of the effective additional support they receive in lessons and through the specific tailor-made programmes that respond well to their specific needs.

The newly appointed phase leaders are very skilled teachers; they are introducing changes to bring improvement and offering support to colleagues with lesson planning and a focus on active learning methods. Phase leaders are keen to extend their influence in support of better

teaching and to support weaker practice through wider opportunities for coaching and mentoring, but so far such work has been limited. Teachers' use of assessment is improving but currently lacks precision in mathematics. Additionally, the marking of pupils' work, though recognising effort, is not well enough focused on identifying how pupils can improve their standard of work and does not enable them to review for themselves how well they are doing. Only Year 6 pupils have a firm grasp on their personal targets.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory overall. The school's work to improve pupils' achievement in English is having a positive impact. Accurate self evaluation pinpoints what needs to be done to tackle the weaknesses in pupils' progress and achievement but the school has not yet taken sufficient action to address the problems in mathematics. A new senior leadership team has made a start in moving things forward and has the capacity to secure improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start in the EYFS with skills that are well below those expected. With good teaching and support from skilled practitioners, children of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress in all the areas of learning for learners of this age. Induction arrangements work very well to help the children make a settled start. Relationships with parents and carers are a growing strength that support the children's readiness to learn. The recently introduced 'activ8' session at the start of the day helps the children to 'wake up and get ready for work'. Over their time in the EYFS the children are helped to build confidence and a 'have a go' attitude that serves them well as they get older. Good attention to their welfare means that children quickly grasp school routines, feel safe and are ready to take full advantage of the exciting experiences provided. The strong emphasis placed on developing children's social skills, helps them to meet the school's expectations for good behaviour, and although some find this challenging to begin with, they soon learn to play with and help each other.

Classrooms are well resourced with plenty of space to enable the children easy movement and free-flow access to the stimulating and varied activities. The children enjoy writing party invitations, tasting and deciding which are their favourite fruits and cereals, or dressing up in the home corner. Staff observe children's development carefully, but their observations are not always used effectively to assist a child's next steps in learning.

The provision is managed well by an experienced phase leader who is an excellent role model. She has a clear understanding of how successfully the provision meets children's needs and what needs to be improved to meet EYFS requirements. For example, she has already identified the need to upgrade the outdoor area in Reception to better support all areas of children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that teaching is consistently good, especially for the more able learners, and that progress is tracked carefully, with intervention as required, to ensure all pupils make good progress.
- Ensure that accurate assessment underpins target setting at the group and individual pupil level in mathematics to assist next steps in learning, support teacher's marking, pupils' self-review and enable senior leaders to keep a close check on the progress of individuals and specific Key Stage 2 sets and groups.

- Establish a robust plan of action for raising standards and achievement in mathematics,, ensure rigorous monitoring , and evaluation of the impact of the school's action on improving achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

From a well below average start, most children achieve well in the EYFS although around a third do not meet the goals expected by the time they transfer to Year 1. Achievement continues to be good in Key Stage 1, where standards have improved since the last inspection and in 2007. A scrutiny of the pupils work and the provisional outcomes of the 2008 teacher assessments indicate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were close to those expected for the age of the pupils.

The picture in standards and achievement is not as positive at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in 2007 were below those seen nationally in all three tested subjects, and in mathematics were much below the standards seen at the time of the last inspection. The standards in English and mathematics in 2007 were below the 65% national floor targets. The school is working effectively to improve standards and achievement in reading and writing, with the unvalidated National Curriculum test results in 2008 showing a significant lift in standards in English. There has not been the same concerted drive to raise standards in mathematics. Despite a slight improvement, provisional results are below national floor targets, school and local authority targets. The school's current predictions for 2009 indicate that standards will fall below the target set, despite the accelerated progress being made because of good teaching in Year 6. The school's existing provision in mathematics is clearly not yet effective enough to enable all pupils to achieve to the full by the time they leave school and this is why achievement is inadequate overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall. Their social and moral development is good whilst their cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. The school's very good pastoral system helps a significant number of pupils to build good attitudes to learning, good relationships and reach good standards of behaviour. During the last academic year, exclusions ran higher than is typical for primary schools but this is due to the school's zero-tolerance stance on bullying and unacceptable behaviour. The school's positive approach to managing behaviour is identified by pupils as helping them to feel safe and well looked after, as is their involvement in the 'Bridges of Trust' project, an inter-generational project involving the police, local sheltered housing and the school. Pupils enjoy the daily 'Activate' keep fit sessions, swim regularly in all year groups and participate in the range of after-school sporting activities. The school council is currently working to make playtime snacks more nutritional and introducing 'Fruity Friday' to raise awareness about healthy eating. Earlier this year the first school 'Business Awards' were launched to develop pupils' entrepreneurial skills. Such experiences, alongside the building of sound literacy and ICT skills, are helping pupils prepare for their future lives but some are lacking the basic skills in numeracy to support their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Good teaching and learning are reflected in the picture of good achievement in the EYFS and in Years 1, 2 and 6, particularly in English. Teaching is effective in helping low-attaining pupils learn successfully in mathematics but this is not the case for all the pupils in the higher set in Years 3, 4 and 5. In some mathematics lessons, for example those taught by phase leaders, more able pupils are offered extra challenges that help them to make good progress. However, this is not always the case and sometimes teachers are simply not clear what knowledge and skills gains pupils should make in their lesson. This low expectation is apparent in the work in some mathematics books that have not been marked so far this term. This results in pupils being unclear about the standard at which they are working or how to improve. In contrast, in Year 6, there is good use of personal targets that help pupils focus on their next steps and encourage them to 'aim high'. The deputy head has devised and implemented a set of 'pathways' that show teachers precisely what steps pupils need to take to move through levels and attain higher standards in writing. This approach has merit as a model to support better teaching and learning in mathematics and identifies secure capacity to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Setting arrangements in English and mathematics are helping teachers to focus on the needs and aspirations of pupils in their groups but there are inconsistencies in the quality of curricular experiences provided. The curriculum for mathematics is not effective enough in enabling all pupils to learn successfully, particularly the more able learners in the higher set in Years 3, 4 and 5. Effective intervention programmes in both English and mathematics have been introduced to help pupils with learning difficulties make steady progress towards their individual targets. Some lower attaining pupils in Year 2 are benefiting from the implementation of a 'reading recovery programme' and the one-to-one support with their reading. The school provides a good range of additional activities that extend the curriculum and enrich pupils' experiences. A 'curriculum guarantee' ensures that pupils experience as many different activities as possible, including weekend residential trips for each year group to an outdoor adventure centre in England, Wales or France. Community cohesion is good and would be outstanding if pupils had more opportunities to learn about different cultures in the UK and internationally. Pupils do not currently learn a modern foreign language.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides very good levels of pastoral care and support for all pupils and works very effectively to break down barriers in an area where there is considerable hardship. Much has been accomplished since the time of the last inspection to reduce absence, which is now at an average level. The school harnesses the expertise of a range of agencies to support its most vulnerable learners and has forged outstanding links with the local community to extend pupils' well-being and enhance community cohesion on a local basis. A Family Support Worker organises opportunities that engage a growing number of parents and carers as partners in education, a significant number of whom take part in the adult classes the school provides.

The academic guidance that pupils receive is in EYFS and Key Stage 1 is effective, helping these pupils to achieve well. Academic guidance is inadequate in mathematics at Key Stage 2. This is because teachers do not assess the pupils' progress accurately enough, particularly the more able learners. As a result, some pupils are given work that is not sufficiently challenging. There is limited use of marking or targets to guide pupils' learning forward.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher gives clear direction and has been uncompromising in her desire to build a staff team that is united in its determination to offer pupils the best education possible. Through a range of monitoring activities, the school is aware of the strengths and weaknesses that exist in its provision but have not yet made a concerted enough effort to tackle the problems in mathematics. The new leadership team has made a useful start in ironing out the shortcomings in the use of assessment that are impeding pupils' good progress. Some key appointments have been made this term, with new staff already active in promoting best practice in teaching and learning in mathematics. The indications are positive and the school has a secure basis for further improvement, including its imminent involvement in the Improving Schools Programme. Governors reflect the community they serve and are supportive and involved in the school. They ensure that statutory and budgetary requirements are met but are not yet implementing the role of constructive 'critical friend' in holding the school fully to account.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
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 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

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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Kingsthorne Primary School, Kingstanding B44 0BX

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the team of inspectors when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing all about the things you rate highly about school. You told us you especially like writing and that the card system for bad behaviour and golden time for rewarding good behaviour were very fair systems and made you feel safe and valued.

Here are some of the other things we found out about your school:

- The staff take very good care of you and provide very helpful support – especially for those of you who find things difficult. There are excellent links with lots of people who come into school to help you learn.
- The youngest children in school have settled well and have made a good start.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are achieving well.
- You are well behaved, get on well with one another and enjoy school.
- You eat healthily and take part in exercise and know very clearly how to keep safe. You like having a school council and working with 'PC Bob' and the community on the 'Bridges of Trust' project.
- Teaching is satisfactory and teachers try hard to make your lessons interesting.
- There are lots of added extra things for you to enjoy such as after-school clubs and the weekend residential trips.
- At the moment, the school is not as effective as it ought to be in helping those of you in the juniors do well in mathematics. Many of you make satisfactory progress but the most able among you do not do as well as you should. There are promising signs that your progress is improving in English.
- The headteacher and other staff are determined to take the school forward.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good in mathematics so that all of you can make good progress.
- Sharpen up assessment and target setting in mathematics to help you know how to improve your work and aim high.
- Set out a plan of action for raising standards in mathematics that the senior team can use to check that you are learning as successfully as possible and being helped to achieve your personal best.

Good wishes and every success for the future.

Christine Field Lead inspector