

Walmley Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103543
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308351
Inspection date	16 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Crawley
Headteacher	Andrew Pilmore
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2005
School address	Walmley Ash Road Sutton Coldfield B76 1JB
Telephone number	01213 511346
Fax number	01213 130194

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' achievements and their learning, how effectively teachers use assessment information when planning work, and the impact of the leadership and management on raising standards and improving pupils' achievements. The inspector gathered evidence from discussions with staff, pupils and governor representatives, from sampling lessons and pupils' work, and from the school's assessments of pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

Walmley is a large junior school that shares a site with its feeder infant school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is much lower than seen nationally, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Walmley Junior is a good school where pupils of all abilities do well. There are some significant strengths, particularly the strong pastoral support, that help to promote the excellent personal development and well-being of the pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, the views of one typical of many when commenting, 'The teachers have created a well-balanced environment where children enjoy learning and are making good progress.' The pupils' comments reflect the views of their parents. They say that teachers make lessons fun and that there are 'lots of interesting things to do.' They talk about the atmosphere in the school, which indeed is warm and welcoming.

Pupils enter school with skills that are above those expected for their age. They make good progress in all year groups, so that by the end of Year 6 they are attaining standards that are well above average in the key areas of English, mathematics and science. Standards have improved significantly in writing because there has been a concerted effort by all staff to address weaknesses in this area. Writing activities are now made more interesting, exciting and relevant. This was demonstrated in a lesson where pupils were keen to be the 'hired apprentice' when they had to demonstrate their persuasive writing skills to encourage customers to buy their product. There are many opportunities for pupils to make effective use of the excellent information and communication technology (ICT) facilities so that they are very well skilled in this aspect of learning. Teachers are very good at questioning pupils, encouraging them to explain their responses. This is one of the reasons pupils speak so confidently. Teaching is consistently good and there are many examples of outstanding practice. Teachers usually make good use of day-to-day assessments to plan work so that it closely matches the needs of individual pupils and thus accelerates their progress. However, the school rightly recognises that this practice is not yet consistent throughout the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. Enjoyment of school is reflected in the pupils' exemplary behaviour and above-average attendance. From the time they enter school, pupils learn how to become responsible citizens and are keen to take on responsibility. The school councillors are proud of their role as play leaders for children in the infant school. They listen carefully to the concerns of their peers and are pleased that action was taken in response to their request for additional play equipment and for the implementation of a homework club. Pupils are enthusiastic in their support for those less fortunate than themselves, regularly supporting charitable activities. One of the reasons pupils achieve well is the responsibility they take for their own learning. For example, in science pupils are encouraged to use the assessment information to identify the areas in which they are less confident. From this, they draw up their own research programme which, with effective guidance from the class teacher, ensures they bridge any gaps in their learning. Regular opportunities for pupils to assess the work of their peers in writing help them to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their own work as well. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community, for example, through their ECO work and performances by the choir at the local supermarket and nursing home.

The curriculum is varied and there is a suitable emphasis on developing the pupils' basic skills. The curriculum is enriched by an exceptionally wide range of visits, visitors and clubs that stimulates the pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment for learning. The curriculum includes valuable opportunities for the pupils to understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe. Older pupils commented positively on the visit of the 'Life Caravan' that helps to

improve their awareness of the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol. There is a very high take-up to attend the many after-school clubs; the only disappointment for some pupils was that it was difficult to choose which to attend! The curriculum prepares the pupils well for the future. There are excellent links with industry, such as those with a major car manufacturer, that provide pupils with a valuable insight into work. Wherever possible, lessons have a practical link such as when pupils are given the task of working out the first-year depreciation of a new car!

The pastoral support for the pupils is very strong, the reason they feel so safe and secure. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are rigorous and effective. The 'Early Birds' club is very well supported and both parents and children are very pleased with the before and after-school provision that is available. There is an excellent partnership with parents, who are kept very well informed as to how their children are progressing. Pupils are very aware of their targets and what they need to do next to improve. Whilst academic guidance is good overall, there are inconsistencies in how assessment is used to plan work on an individual basis.

Leadership and management are good. Since his arrival, the headteacher has gained the confidence of parents and staff, helping to maintain the happy learning environment. There is a refreshing lack of complacency and the leadership is keen to improve the school's provision further through incisive self-evaluation. To this end, improved tracking and assessment procedures have been introduced which are providing middle managers with a clearer understanding of how well the pupils are progressing. They have begun to use this information effectively, 'raising the bar' to ensure the school's challenging targets are met. The middle managers are undergoing training to improve their skills as they rightly recognise that they need to be more effective in ensuring all teachers adopt a consistent approach in using assessment to plan work for individuals. Governors support the school well and take an active role in monitoring the school's progress towards its goal of becoming 'one of the best'. The progress made by the school since the previous inspection and the enthusiasm and skills of staff show that it is well placed to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers make more effective use of assessment information so that work is matched more closely to the needs of individual pupils.
- Develop the role of middle managers to enable them to become more effective in monitoring how well teachers use assessment information to plan work.

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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?	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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

17 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Walmley Junior School, Sutton Coldfield B76 1JB

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. It was a pleasure to meet you and talk with you about your work and why you enjoy being in your good school. Those in charge of the school and the teachers do a good job. This is the reason why the standards you reach at the end of Year 6 are well above average.

Here are some of the good things about your school.

- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Most of you make sensible choices about what you eat and take plenty of exercise.
- You are very good at looking after one another and know how to keep safe. This is because you are kind and act sensibly.
- You behave exceptionally well and are friendly and polite because you understand the importance of respecting the views and beliefs of others.
- You thoroughly enjoy school, which is shown in your good attendance.
- You do lots of work to help those who are less fortunate than you. Your school council works hard on your behalf and this helps to improve your school.
- Staff look after you very well and provide you with lots of interesting activities.

I have asked those in charge of the school to consider the following to make your school an even better place.

- Ensure the teachers make the best use of information for checking your progress when planning your work.
- Develop how those in charge work with your teachers to check how well they are doing.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and doing your best.

Yours faithfully

Mr Paul Edwards Lead inspector

Annex B

17 April 2008

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