

The Dame Ellen Pinsent School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103615
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308362
Inspection date	19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Higgins
Headteacher	Debbie Allen
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Ardencote Road Birmingham B13 0RW
Telephone number	01214 442487
Fax number	01214 647295

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large special day school serving the whole of the south Birmingham area. Pupils in many cases come from areas of social and economic disadvantage. Over half of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and a third speak English as an additional language. A quarter of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Children's attainment on entry is very low because of their learning difficulties. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties (MLD); others have severe learning difficulties (SLD), speech and language difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). All pupils have more than one statement of special educational need. Four pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school also has a significant minority of pupils who come from families who have asylum seeking status.

The school works closely with many local special and mainstream schools and last year set up a base at a local school. This successful provision enabled three pupils to return to mainstream schooling. The school has achieved many awards for its work. The school is part of Birmingham's Creative Partnership and also works effectively with a local specialist sports college and local technology colleges to enhance pupils' learning and self-esteem.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, which successfully meets the varied and complex needs of its pupils. It has established highly effective links with parents who all speak about the school in glowing terms. One commented, 'All the staff from the headteacher to the caretaker are wonderful, professional and very caring.' Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start. From very low starting points, they make good progress towards their individual targets. They learn to communicate effectively using sign language, they behave very well and learn to get on well with others. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6, whatever their capabilities and backgrounds, also achieve well. Their personal and social skills develop particularly well. Although standards are exceptionally low, because of pupils' complex learning needs, their achievement is good throughout the school because teaching is of a good quality and the effective curriculum is skilfully adapted to suit individual needs.

The staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The calm and enjoyable atmosphere that prevails in lessons ensures that pupils remain interested in their work, behave exceptionally well and learn effectively. The positive experiences pupils have in lessons and the good support they are given raises their self-esteem and confidence. Some teachers are skilled at ensuring that pupils are clear about what they will learn in lessons but not all have such explanations or know how to improve their work. In these cases learning is less successful. Pupils' personal development is good and is a significant strength of the school. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they make significant gains in developing their confidence and self-esteem. They treat each other, their teachers and the environment with care and respect. Relationships are excellent and most pupils are considerate of the needs of others. Pupils use the school council to bring about changes such as improvements to the outdoor environment that benefit all. Pupils learn effectively about the importance of exercise and healthy eating. They say they love coming to school and 'wouldn't want to change anything'. They trust the adults and are confident that help will be provided when required. The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good. The school keeps detailed and comprehensive assessment records. Currently, this information is used to set realistic but not sufficiently challenging targets for all pupils in national tests.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is exceptionally clear about the direction the school should take and together with an effective senior leadership team works tirelessly to bring about improvements. The school has forged effective working relationships with other local providers and agencies, which have impacted positively on curriculum developments. Leaders, managers and staff have a wide range of experience and expertise, which greatly benefits the school, partner organisations and the local authority. Issues raised by the last inspection were tackled effectively. Governance is very supportive and is effectively developing its role in evaluating the school's work. The leadership of the school is ambitious and well placed to bring about further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's achievement is good in relation to their very low starting points although standards reached, in relation to national expectations for children of this age, are very low. When they start school over half of the children have little or no communication. Good provision results in all children starting Year 1 with some signing skills and making good progress in their personal care skills. Good teaching enables all children to make good progress, particularly in learning

to share resources and become increasingly independent. Good arrangements for introducing children to the school, together with clear routines and good teamwork, ensures that children become increasingly confident and settle quickly and happily. There are highly effective relationships with parents who say they feel their children are very well cared for and that they appreciate the kindness and the daily reports they receive in their children's home-school diaries. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed and the school has identified accurately that the main area for improvement is to make the outdoor area more interesting and exciting.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure all pupils understand what they are to learn in lessons and how they can improve their work.
- Ensure senior leaders set even higher targets for pupils to achieve in tests.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although standards are well below those in mainstream schools, by the time the pupils leave they all make good progress in relation to their very low starting points. The strong focus the school puts on developing pupils' social and personal skills ensures that all pupils make especially good progress in these areas. The school's results compare favourably with other MLD schools nationally both at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Senior leaders are not complacent however and recognise that even higher and more challenging targets could be set. Their analysis has identified that occasionally a small number of White British pupils do not achieve quite as well as those from minority ethnic backgrounds and they have started to put successful measures into place to address this. Pupils at an early stage of learning English achieve well because of effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal and social development is a central focus of the school's work, and as a result their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Consequently the school is a harmonious and very friendly place. The staff work hard to ensure that pupils celebrate and value each other's faiths and cultures. Pupils readily celebrate the achievements of others. Pupils chose the school's motto, 'Shine like a star' and they eagerly wait to see who will be selected as 'Star of the Week' in each class. It is clear from the pupils' happy faces and older pupils' positive comments that they all really enjoy school. Pupils increasingly realise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and many older pupils enjoy attending sports clubs. The school's football team has had considerable success in local tournaments. Pupils and parents are very proud of their school and relationships throughout are excellent. Pupils make a successful contribution to the community and many become increasingly independent. Occasionally in some lessons staff provide pupils with equipment and resources too quickly thereby restricting pupils' independence. There is an active school council. Older pupils (Friendship Squad) support the younger children at various times such as playtime and lunchtime. Attendance is broadly average compared to the national picture. Pupils are being well equipped with the skills they will require in their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The staff manage pupils' behaviour extremely well and a calm and purposeful atmosphere pervades the school. Most staff use a wide variety of ways to support pupils in gaining the confidence to communicate. Pictures, signs, symbols, bright attractive resources, computer technology and puppets are used effectively to ensure pupils are fully engaged and want to express their ideas. Not all teachers tell pupils what they will be learning in lessons, which restricts their achievement. Pupils are not always aware of their learning targets and so cannot review whether they have succeeded in meeting them at the end of a lesson. A team of talented teaching assistants effectively supports pupils' learning and this works particularly well when they are working with individual pupils or with small groups.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A very good programme for pupils' personal and health education is in place, which is one of the key factors in ensuring pupils' excellent behaviour. Senior leaders have recently reviewed and revised how the school plans what pupils will learn and have correctly identified the need to make increased links between subjects. There is an impressive enrichment programme, which includes many planned visits out of school, rich and varied arts and sports activities as well as many clubs. A very good programme for pupils' personal and health education is in place. The school's highly effective links with other local schools and agencies ensure that the curriculum is vibrant and constantly developing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school succeeds in making sure that all pupils are well cared for, kept safe and supported effectively. Health, safety and child protection procedures are rigorous and effectively applied in supporting vulnerable pupils. Arrangements for managing pupils' intimate care needs are performed sensitively. There are good arrangements for assessing how well pupils are doing in their personal development and in their academic learning. Staff regularly discuss pupils' progress with senior leaders, and decide what needs to be done next. A great deal of valuable assessment information is gathered. However not all pupils are clear about what they are to learn in lessons and are unaware of how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's determination and unstinting pursuit of the pupils' best interests have ensured that the dedicated staff work as a cohesive team with a very clear sense of direction. Good leadership and management at all levels throughout the school considerably enhance provision because the staff are always striving to do better. Comprehensive training is managed and developed very well and brings together all those involved with the pupils, including parents and governors, to constantly seek ways to improve. The school succeeds in ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunity to succeed. The school's self-evaluation is good and is well

supported by regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' achievement and personal development. Senior leaders accept that they could set even higher assessment targets for pupils and that some pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they are to learn in lessons or how they can improve their work. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and demonstrates a strong commitment and capacity to improve even 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?	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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	1
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	3
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

We liked coming to your school. You were friendly and you smiled at us, which made us feel very welcome. Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

- You really enjoy being at school and like learning.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are kind to each other.
- Your curriculum and teaching are good and help you learn well.
- All the staff take good care of you and keep you safe and happy.
- We think that you must have a really good time in all the extra activities.
- Everyone works very hard to make sure you have a good school. There are two things that we want the staff and governors to do to make your school even better.
- Make sure all teachers tell you what you are going to learn in lessons and how you can improve your work.
- Set even higher targets for you to reach in tests.

You can help your teachers by always working hard, taking good care of each other and carrying on behaving so well.

We wish you all the very best for the future.



20 September 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Dame Ellen Pinsent School, Birmingham, B13 0RW

We liked coming to your school. You were friendly and you smiled at us, which made us feel very welcome. Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

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- Your behaviour is excellent and you are kind to each other.
- Your curriculum and teaching are good and help you learn well.
- All the staff take good care of you and keep you safe and happy.
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There are two things that we want the staff and governors to do to make your school even better.

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- Set even higher targets for you to reach in tests.

You can help your teachers by always working hard, taking good care of each other and carrying on behaving so well.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Joyce Cox
Lead inspector