

# Brierley Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103776
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dudley
<b>Inspection number</b>	308418
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Peter Callow

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	199
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Hodgetts
<b>Headteacher</b>	T Potter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Mill Street Brierley Hill DY5 2TD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01384 816980
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Brierley Hill is an average-sized primary school. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds, but many live in high-rise buildings close to the school. The proportion eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. Over a quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The number of refugees and asylum seekers has increased significantly in the last three years and the proportion can sometimes be as high as one fifth of the school population. Consequently, the proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the normal time is much higher than average. Some of these pupils have little experience of attending school and many have little or no English. A quarter of pupils in the school have English as an additional language (EAL), which is nearly twice the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is about one third, which again is above average.

About one third of the teaching staff have changed since the last inspection, including the headteacher who joined the school in April 2008. The school holds a number of awards, including Investors in People, Leading Parent Partnership and Healthy Schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Pupils say they go to a good school and they are right. They are proud of their school and are aware of its many strengths and, in particular, the fact that they are extremely well looked after. Every child, whatever their background or ability, is made to feel part of the school family and to feel safe and secure. The way that staff at all levels work with parents and a wide range of different agencies to support pupils' learning and well-being is outstanding.

When children begin school in the Nursery class, their levels of skill are much lower than normally expected. From these very low starting points, children make good progress through the Foundation Stage. They achieve well through the school so that by the time they leave in Year 6, standards in English and mathematics are just a little below average. The achievement of pupils joining the school at other times, and for however briefly, is also good, as is that of pupils with LDD or EAL. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 are a little lower than might be expected, partly because many of them are still at the early stages of learning, but also because the expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not quite as high as in other parts of the school.

The excellent pastoral care makes a strong contribution to the outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils. As a result, the vast majority enjoy school enormously, are very confident and motivated and behave extremely well. They also have an outstanding understanding of how to live healthily. Pupils like, and respond well to, the various systems of rewards for good behaviour and trying hard in their work. They take the many responsibilities they are given very seriously, especially in their role as school councillors, contributing their ideas for example to the design of the information and communication technology (ICT) suite. Their contribution to the wider community is also excellent, with pupils participating in a wide range of local events and raising funds for charities such as the Acorns Hospice.

Practical activities are successfully used, wherever possible, in the curriculum to make learning exciting and meaningful and to help pupils enjoy school life. The development of pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy is rightly given a strong focus. The quality of teaching and learning is good, particularly because work is carefully planned to meet the very different needs of learners and especially those with EAL. Adults use questioning as a good strategy to engage pupils but they do not always use a wide enough range of questions to ensure that all groups of learners are challenged in their thinking, particularly those who are more able. Pupils' academic guidance is improving, with an increasing emphasis on individual targets and a better quality of marking of their work. However, marking does not yet consistently help to identify what pupils need to do to get better.

Good leadership and a highly effective Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are major factors in the school having a good capacity to improve further. In their determination to raise standards through the use of challenging targets, the SLT are succeeding while maintaining the very high level of care, particularly for the increasing numbers of vulnerable pupils, for instance refugees and asylum seekers. As one parent said, 'The school does its very best to produce well-rounded and educated pupils, often in difficult circumstances.'

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Good induction procedures enable children to settle quickly into the Nursery class and to enjoy school life. On entry, the majority have literacy, numeracy, social and emotional skills that are very weak and many have speech and language difficulties. Although their levels of skill are not as advanced as those of children of a similar age, by the time children leave the Foundation Stage, the gap between the standards they have reached and the national average has narrowed. As a result of good teaching that is well matched to their needs, all groups of children achieve well. Their emotional development is outstanding because of the high quality of care they receive and the emphasis on appreciating the needs of others and understanding what is right and wrong. There is also a good emphasis in the curriculum on children's physical development because of the few opportunities presented for this where many of them live. However, as the school is aware, the outdoor environment is very limited not only for providing opportunities for children's physical development but for learning in general. There are good plans in hand to improve it.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly by the end of Year 2.
- Ensure that teachers use a wider range of questions to challenge pupils of all abilities in their thinking and especially those who are more able.
- Ensure that the marking of pupils' work consistently indicates how they can improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

After leaving the Foundation Stage, pupils continue to achieve well as they move up through the school. Although standards are still below average at the end of Year 2, by the time they leave in Year 6, the gap between their standards in English and in mathematics and the national average has closed considerably. In the last few years, standards at the end of Year 6 have been just a little below average, although not many pupils have reached the higher Level 5. The school has been working hard to give greater challenge across the school for pupils who are more able, and unvalidated data for 2008 shows a big improvement for these pupils by the end of Year 6. The proportion reaching Level 5 in English and mathematics is similar to the national average for 2007, whilst in science it is above that average. In Key Stage 1, there are not yet the same encouraging signs because, in general, expectations of all abilities are not quite as high and consequently pupils do not make as much progress. Throughout the school, pupils with LDD or EAL achieve as well as other pupils because of the high quality of support and the well-matched provision they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 1

The many strengths in pupils' personal development result in a very caring school community where there is a strong ethos of mutual respect. Pupils' abilities to relate well to each other and to take responsibility are good preparation for later life, although their standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are limiting factors. Assemblies are highly memorable occasions which are appreciated by pupils and they remember and act on the values promoted in 'Thought for the Day'. Pupils' cultural development is excellent and greatly enhanced by opportunities such as

the recently held Green Faith Day, when pupils in Year 5 took part in an inter-schools competition to make three-dimensional works of art, associated with different faiths, from recycled materials. Despite the fact that pupils enjoy school very much, attendance is below average. This is mainly as the result of the number of parents who take their children on holiday in school time. The school, however, actively discourages this and works extremely hard to promote regular and punctual attendance for every child.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Excellent relationships between adults and pupils and the pupils themselves are a positive feature of every lesson. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and are keen to succeed. Teachers make good use of ongoing assessments to plan activities that build well on previous learning for pupils of different abilities and those with EAL. Vulnerable individuals and groups of pupils receive outstanding support from classroom assistants who are confident, well prepared and show initiative. Adults use questions well to engage pupils and to try to move their learning forward. However, this is not always as successful as it might be, especially in Years 1 and 2, because they do not always use a wide enough range of questions to ensure appropriate challenge for the differing abilities of their pupils. This means, in particular, that the more able are often not sufficiently challenged in their thinking.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Through the organisation of events such as special days and themed weeks and the good use of visits, there has been an increased emphasis on linking subjects together. However, the school is aware that there is scope for a more creative curriculum with more opportunities for pupils to be actively involved. It is keen to provide as broad and rich a range of experiences for pupils as it can and, for example, provides violin teaching to all the pupils in Year 2. 'Friday Clubs' are greatly enjoyed by pupils in Years 3 to 6 because they have a chance to learn different languages and crafts. None of this happens at the expense of a strong focus on English and mathematics where, this year, there has been a particular emphasis on developing pupils' skills in writing and problem solving. Every opportunity is exploited to support pupils' personal development and the school's success in this has led to it being recognised as a leading school for the development of the social and emotional aspects of learning.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The outstanding care given to pupils contributes significantly to their great enjoyment of school and their feeling safe and secure. The recent appointment of a learning mentor is providing invaluable support in promoting self-esteem and a smooth transition for pupils to secondary school. Procedures for child protection are rigorous and all other checks to safeguard pupils' health, safety and well-being are firmly in place. The recent setting of individual targets in writing is beginning to show a positive impact on raising standards and the school has plans to introduce these in reading and mathematics next year. Pupils' work is marked regularly, often with positive comments about how well they are doing. There are some good examples

of next steps being identified to help pupils improve their 'Big Writing' but this effective practice is not used consistently in other subjects.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The members of the SLT are a highly effective team because of their combined skills and talents, particularly with regard to the care of pupils and the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. As a result, the headteacher has, in a very short space of time, achieved a very accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, the challenges it faces and clear ideas about how to bring about further improvement. The role of middle leaders, such as subject coordinators, is currently underdeveloped, although a good start has been made to address this by using a variety of coaching strategies. Leaders at all levels passionately believe in the inclusion of pupils from different backgrounds that ensures this is a positive feature and central to the school's ethos. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and acknowledge how successfully the school involves them in activities, such as the 'Inspire Workshops', and helps them to support their children's learning. The role of governors has developed considerably in recent years so that they now make a good contribution and both support and challenge the school well.

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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 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 <sup>1</sup> 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?	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	3
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	3

### 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brierley Hill Primary School, Brierley Hill DY5 2TD

We were really pleased to visit your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and polite to us. You were keen to tell us that you go to a good school and we agree. It was very obvious how happy you are in school and you explained all the things you enjoy, like the practical activities, the visits out of school and 'Friday Clubs'.

Above all, you know how well looked after you are and this is a real strength of the school. All the adults go out of their way, not only to help you in your work but also to support you if you have any personal problems. You told us that there is always someone who will listen to you.

These are some of the other good things that are happening:

- You have extremely good attitudes to your work.
- You are taught well and make good progress.
- You are learning to be very responsible and to care for one another.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders consider carefully what is going well in school and what needs to be improved.

These are the things we have asked the adults to do to make your school even better:

- Improve the standards of your work in English and mathematics, particularly for those of you in Key Stage 1.
- Use different sorts of questions so that whatever your ability, you are challenged to think hard, particularly those of you who find learning quite easy.
- Write comments in your books to help you to understand how you can make your work better.

You can help by continuing to be enthusiastic about your learning and to show the same care and concern for each other that we saw when we visited.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Mr Peter Callow Lead inspector