

Beaconside Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 116768 |
| Local Authority | Worcestershire |
| Inspection number | 312394 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Ian Hodgkinson |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | 193 |
| School | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Stuart Marks |
| Headteacher | Paul Freear |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 January 2006 |
| School address | Hazel Road Rubery Rednal Birmingham B45 9DX |
| Telephone number | 01214 533801 |
| Fax number | 01214 530844 |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Beaconside serves a suburban district on the south-western edge of Birmingham. Social and economic conditions are reasonably favourable in the vicinity of the school, but half of the pupils come from more disadvantaged wards. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is, however, well above average because the school offers specialist resource bases for autistic pupils and for pupils with hearing impairments. The school also offers an after-school club which has been inspected separately, and a range of other extended services, including literacy and numeracy sessions for parents. A new headteacher took up post in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Beaconside offers its pupils a satisfactory education, which leads to sound academic achievement. There are particular strengths in pupils' personal and social development. Pupils' attainment has improved steadily in recent years and is broadly average overall. Well-structured programmes for reading and writing have secured above-average standards of literacy. However, national tests results for Year 6 pupils in mathematics have been below average for some time and have represented poor progress for pupils across Key Stage 2. The school's actions to overcome this weakness have successfully eliminated underachievement in mathematics in most year groups, though a few pupils in Year 6 are still not doing as well as they should.

The school's efforts to promote positive values, for example, through its assemblies programme, have created an environment where pupils feel welcomed, get on well together and are willing to make positive contributions to the school and wider community. Parents praise the school's education of 'the whole child'. A good and enjoyable curriculum helps in this. The provision of extra-curricular sports clubs is a strength and participation rates are excellent, helping pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers effectively use resources both in and out of the classroom to enliven lessons and make them fun. This is particularly so in the Foundation Stage (nursery and Reception), where children make good progress. Across the school, teachers foster good relationships between pupils by encouraging them to work collaboratively and support each other. Staff give sensitive and well-directed support to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring that they are included as much as possible in all aspects of lessons. As a result, these pupils make good progress. Higher attainers, however, make slower progress, and too few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment in tests in Year 2 and Year 6. Sometimes work is not demanding enough, but even when higher attainers are given harder work to do, they are not always given enough guidance to help them rise to the challenge. The school's caring ethos ensures that pupils feel very safe and secure. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly to show how well it has met its objectives. However, marking does not always indicate how standards can be improved, and not all children are aware of their targets for next steps in raising attainment, especially in mathematics.

The new headteacher is providing clear direction and has set in place a well focused school development plan to tackle key shortcomings in pupils' achievement. Progress in raising achievement in mathematics and for higher attainers has nonetheless been slow since the last inspection. This is because some shortcomings in the monitoring of teaching and learning have led to an over generous a view of the quality of the school's provision with insufficient focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement. However, with steadily rising attainment and better achievement in mathematics, the school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the nursery has varied over time. For most of the current year groups in school, children's skills were in line with those expected nationally when they joined the school, but skills were below expectation for the groups currently in Reception and Years 1 and 2. The children currently in nursery and Reception are making good progress in nearly all areas

of learning. Those in Reception have made rapid progress in communication, language and literacy, reflecting the success of the school's phonics programme. They are on track to reach average standards by the time they finish the Foundation Stage.

Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy their education and show delight in new experiences, such as investigating which materials could be used to waterproof the roof of a home for hedgehogs, and using their imagination as they pretend to be baby dragons. Teachers and support staff are skilled at assessing children's achievements and use the tracking data well to plan work, which challenges and supports all the children. There are strong links with families, and parents are actively encouraged to become involved in supporting their children. The Foundation Stage manager leads a strong team well. Her drive to improve provision, for example, through making full use of the 'Forest School' outdoor classroom in the woods, impacts positively on achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and ensure that pupils are clear about the targets they need to reach as next steps in improving their progress.
- Improve the support and challenge for higher attainers to raise their achievement.
- Ensure that monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is rigorously focused on how well the school's provision helps to improve pupils' learning and achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have been a little above average in tests at the end of Year 2, reflecting generally good progress made by pupils in their earlier years at the school. Results have been weaker in tests at the end of Year 6, though, mainly because of below-average standards and weak progress in mathematics. Action has now been taken to raise teachers' expectations about what pupils need to learn in mathematics across Years 3 to 6. As a result, pupils are now generally working at least in line with national averages and underachievement in mathematics has mostly been overcome. Assessments show that a few pupils currently in Year 6 are still not reaching the levels they should in mathematics based on their prior attainment. However, the school is making provision to boost their progress. Overall standards by Year 6 have been rising steadily. Literacy standards across the school have risen strongly through the school's structured approaches to reading and writing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of good care and support, but support is less effective for higher attainers, who make slower, albeit satisfactory, progress overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school life and demonstrate good attitudes towards learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and this contributes very effectively to pupils' learning and their sense of safety and well-being. Attendance is good and rates are above national levels. Pupils value the wide variety of opportunities for exercise and participation rates for extra-curricular sport are very high. The healthy school lunches and availability of fruit snacks

and water also encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and they develop into considerate young citizens. Relationships are a strength of the school and pupils work well with each other. Pupils attached to the resource bases are fully included in school life and they get on well with their mainstream peers. Across the school, pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The newly revived school council is keen to improve school life and pupils are particularly proud of their support for a child from Ethiopia. Pupils' preparation for later life is satisfactory. They are able to work in teams and use their initiative in organising fundraising events, but their number skills in problem solving are less well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers make learning enjoyable for pupils by making good use of a wide range of resources both in and out of the classroom to stimulate pupils' interests. Interactive whiteboards are often skilfully used to explain ideas to pupils and provide them with examples in how to solve problems. Teachers' use of assessment information to guide their planning of lessons is variable. It is a strength in the Foundation Stage, where staff are skilful at recognising how to help pupils develop new skills from their activities. In literacy throughout the school, work is assessed against clear objectives which help most pupils make good progress. In mathematics, teachers are now using assessment information much more rigorously to plan, and this has significantly raised teachers' expectations and standards, especially in Key Stage 2. In mathematics, however, teachers do not give precise details in marking and other feedback about whether objectives have been met and which skills need improving. Higher attainers are not always suitably challenged, and where harder work is set for them, they are not always given enough support and guidance to help them complete the task.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has successfully developed a rich and varied curriculum, which has a particularly positive impact on the pupils' personal development. Adapting the adjoining woods as an outdoor classroom has enabled staff to plan exciting and imaginative activities that deepen pupils' understanding and develop their curiosity. Problem-solving skills in mathematics remain an area of relative weakness. While pupils are encouraged to use their literacy skills widely, there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to apply number skills across a range of subjects. There is a good range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, which have a strong emphasis on sport and exercise. Visits and visitors deepen and broaden pupils' understanding of the world and give them, for example, a good awareness of the cultural and religious diversity of modern Britain.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff provide a caring and supportive environment in which pupils thrive. Adults working in the school have a good understanding of pupils' needs and work effectively with external agencies to give good support to vulnerable students and those with particular difficulties. The early identification and close monitoring of progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities ensures that work is effectively matched to the needs of these pupils and this has a positive impact on their achievement. The school pays due attention to pupils' safety, and procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government requirements. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The school has developed a robust system to track pupils' progress and intervene where there is underachievement. However, in some classes in literacy and most classes in numeracy, pupils are not sufficiently aware of the next steps they need to take in their learning to improve their attainment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's leaders have successfully maintained and developed a positive ethos that is greatly valued by pupils and their parents. However, school leadership has been relatively slow to respond to some significant weaknesses in achievement. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been insufficiently focused on how well teaching affects the learning and achievement of pupils. The involvement of subject leaders in this process has been insufficient. Governors have skilfully managed the development of the school's facilities and extended services, bringing much benefit to the community. However, in the past, searching questions have not been raised to hold the school's leaders to account over standards. Nonetheless, positive action is now in hand. Underachievement in mathematics has been overcome through a programme to develop the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment to raise expectations and improve planning. Subject leadership is fully involved in helping teachers use assessment to raise standards in numeracy and literacy. The new headteacher has produced a development plan based on an accurate appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses. While the school's targets for improvement have been over-ambitious, standards are set to rise further this year to continue a positive upward trend, confirming the satisfactory impact of current improvement strategies.

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

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| 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? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |

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

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| 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 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| 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? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beaconside Primary and Nursery School, Rubery B45 9DX

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We much enjoyed talking to you and seeing you at work and at play. We were particularly impressed by the number of you who got involved in after-school clubs, especially for sport. This is really helping you to stay fit and healthy. You and your parents made it clear to us how much you enjoy school and value the warm relationships you are able to develop. This is helped by the good curriculum and activities you are offered, both inside and beyond the classroom, which make your learning fun.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. You make the progress expected of you to reach standards which are similar to those found in most schools. Those of you who need some special help in your learning are well supported and make good progress. Children in nursery and Reception also make good progress as they get good help from staff to learn new skills in enjoyable activities.

Your school is soundly led and managed, and is being given good direction by the new headteacher and senior team. They have recognised ways in which the school can get even better. My report sets out some main ways in which the school can improve. Firstly, results in mathematics tests in Year 6 have been low for some years. These are set to improve, and the school can make further progress by ensuring that you all know exactly which skills you need to work on to get better at mathematics. You can help in this by working hard on the areas for improvement you are given. Secondly, we have asked the teachers to make sure that those of you who are able to cope with more difficult work get enough challenging activities to work on, and are helped to rise to the challenges. Finally, we have asked the school's leaders and managers to improve the checks they make on how well you are learning in the classroom.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson Lead inspector

22 February 2008

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I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Lead inspector