

Gilbertstone Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103201
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323775
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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)	450
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Hall
Headteacher	Ceri Crosskey
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Clay Lane Birmingham B26 1EH
Telephone number	01214 644664
Fax number	01214 648648

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school. A larger than average proportion of pupils, around a fifth, have English as an additional language, and the main first languages spoken are Punjabi, Bengali and Arabic. A very small number are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to average. Children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage have skills broadly as expected for their age. The headteacher has been in the school less than two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving fast under effective leadership and management. In particular, the headteacher provides strong leadership and direction for the school's improvement. She is well supported by governors, other leaders and managers, and by the high level of commitment of all staff. Given the improvements so far, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Standards are broadly average and above average in literacy. Standards in numeracy are average and are rising, but despite fast progress in many classes, they have not worked their way through fully to the oldest pupils. Achievement is satisfactory overall, and it is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and in literacy at Key Stage 2. Recent unsatisfactory achievement and lower than acceptable standards, especially at Key Stage 2, have been reversed. However, in a minority of classes, small groups of pupils, including on occasions the more able, do not achieve as well as they should.

Parents recognise that the school is improving. For example, one wrote in reply to the Ofsted questionnaire, 'I have been impressed with the way the school has moved forward. In the last year, more after-school activities have started and parents are encouraged to take part in their children's learning'. The great majority of parents welcome the good quality communications, support and guidance from the school.

Pupils' personal development is good and much improved since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy school, behave well and have mostly good attitudes to learning. Their attendance is satisfactory and the great majority attend well. Pupils take on responsibilities willingly and carry them out conscientiously. For example, older pupils help supervise behaviour in corridors and the playground. Pupils behave safely and with consideration and respect for other pupils, whatever their backgrounds. Pupils' knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles is good and most take part in some form of physical activity. Their preparedness for future life is satisfactory overall, but good in their development of social skills and literacy.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving, and has elements of excellence. Work is generally challenging, well planned and, in the best instances fast paced with effective reinforcement of learning. Teachers usually provide interesting activities that meet pupils' learning needs. Occasionally this is not the case and work does not always challenge or engage all pupils. Marking often gives good guidance to pupils on how well they are doing and how they can improve, but this is not consistent because new procedures are not yet followed by all staff. The good curriculum is organised effectively to involve pupils in their learning and this is helping drive up standards. Links between subjects and the wide range of visits and visitors help make the curriculum interesting and relevant. The range of out-of-school activities is good and supported well by pupils.

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Safeguarding procedures are robust, pupils are well cared for, and staff and learning mentors provide effective support for pupils and families. The school works extremely hard to improve the attendance of a very small number of persistently absent pupils. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall and is based on accurate assessment of pupils' performance and progress. However, new procedures to set targets for pupils are not fully established and pupils are not always sure what their targets are or how they can achieve them.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress and, by the end of the Reception Year, reach standards which are above average. Good induction arrangements in the Nursery help the children to settle quickly into their first sessions in the morning and afternoon. They are well cared for and thrive in the supportive and stimulating setting. An 'open door' policy is at the heart of good links with parents and supporting agencies. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and responsive to any perceived weaknesses. For example, the ample outdoor play facilities are now used regularly as part of the planned curriculum. A dip in the attainment of children's creative development has led to a greater emphasis on addressing the needs of boys through role play. Themes such as 'Bob the Builder', Treasure Island and the Wolves' Den have appealed to boys and led to higher levels of creative development by the start of Year 1. An emphasis on using new initiatives, including greater use of information and communication technology (ICT), has led to an improvement in children's understanding of letters and sounds. This has not yet been sufficiently extended to developing early writing, but is rightly the focus of planned development for this key skill.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' achievement by the end of Key Stage 2, especially in numeracy.
- Ensure that teaching is sufficiently well adapted to challenge the most able and to engage all groups of pupils in their learning.
- Ensure that marking and target setting provide pupils with clear indication of how well they are doing, what they need to do next, and give guidance on how to improve 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 are rising throughout the school. In reading, standards are particularly good and writing is close behind. This is because of the effective strategy of providing pupils with opportunities to write independently and by focusing on writing skills. In most Key Stage 2 classes, pupils make good progress in developing numeracy skills but the legacy of past low standards means they have not caught up by the upper end of the key stage. Rising standards are due to a sharp focus on pupils' individual weaknesses and in developing competence in basic number work and problem solving. Standards are broadly average in science and rising fast, and pupils write well about what they know. Rightly, the school is focusing on literacy (especially writing) and numeracy as the school's priorities for improvement. Across several classes, small numbers of pupils underachieve. Occasionally it is a few able pupils because work is not challenging, and occasionally it is a group of boys or girls who do not engage enough in learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, and some make good progress where intervention and support are good. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, similar to that of other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and are keen to join in the activities offered to them. As a result, attendance is improving although it remains average because a very small number of pupils are often absent, despite the school's best efforts. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful, behaving responsibly and safely in lessons and around the school. They report that there have been no recent incidents of bullying or racial harassment and that past ones were dealt with promptly and sensitively. The award of Healthy School and Sportsmark status is testament to the school's effective promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The school council meets regularly and members speak proudly of the suggestions they have made which have improved pupils' well-being. For example, they have been instrumental in promoting a policy of having only water to drink in school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a keen awareness and interest in cultures other than their own and displays of pupils' work around the school highlight this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is improving rapidly. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well. Consequently, most pupils are eager to learn and they work hard. An increasingly wide range of learning styles is used, some of which involve re-enforcing learning through, for example, movement and music. This appeals to some pupils who find more traditional methods of learning difficult. Work is increasingly well planned to meet the needs of pupils. Most lessons have clear learning objectives, so pupils are clear about the purpose of their learning. However, a minority of lessons still do not present sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. Much marking is good, providing clear guidance to pupils on how to reach their learning targets, but this is too variable across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is organised well to meet the needs and interests of most pupils, although on occasions the subject matter or method of presentation does not fully engage the interests of small groups of boys or girls. There are good opportunities for pupils to play musical instruments and to learn a foreign language. They also enjoy well-planned topic work, visits and activities organised by visitors to the school. Work is provided to help pupils to catch up when they have fallen behind and this is starting to have a positive impact, especially in relation to writing. There are fruitful links between subjects and effective strategies to promote the development of pupils' understanding of the diverse communities and cultures, past and present, in Britain and further afield. For example, during a topic on the Second World War, pupils celebrated with a mock street party and enjoyed the reminiscences of a member of the local community. Good opportunities are provided to develop independence and to use ICT, for example for research.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff know pupils well and develop warm relationships with them. Relationships with homes are very good and enhance the quality of care and support given to pupils. The school complies with all legislation to ensure pupils are safe and the procedures to do this are good. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and improving and is enhanced by the good links the school has established with outside agencies. In particular, arrangements to help pupils with social and emotional problems are effective. Although arrangements for setting pupils learning targets are steadily improving, they are not consistently used in all classes. Coupled with some marking that gives too little advice on how to improve work, some pupils are not always clear about how they can improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior staff have been instrumental in initiating many of the improvements seen in the school. There have been several recent appointments to subject and other middle management positions. Those new to responsibility posts are rapidly gaining the skills they need to be good leaders and managers through effective training and support from the headteacher. There is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and actions taken so far to raise standards in writing and numeracy are having a positive effect. Given the improvements in standards and achievement, pupils' personal development and the curriculum, the capacity for further improvement is good. Governors play a key role in helping drive up standards and they are attempting to fill vacancies with people who will ensure a more even representation of the school's community.

Community cohesion is promoted well, particularly at the school and local levels. It is reinforced effectively through strong links with parents, local organisations and the increasing role of the school as a centre for the local community. Policies to promote equal opportunities and counter discrimination are carried through with good effect.

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

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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	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/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?	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
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	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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Gilbertstone Primary School, Birmingham B26 1EH

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to us during the inspection. We spoke to many of you in lessons, in meetings and around school. You gave us a very good idea about what you thought of your school and what it is like.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving fast but there has not been enough time for all of the recent improvements to have had full effect.
- The headteacher has not been at the school long, but what she, the staff and governors are doing is making sure the school continues to improve.
- Your achievement is satisfactory overall, and is particularly good in literacy. Your progress is improving all the time.
- Teachers make lessons interesting to help you enjoy learning. They organise many good activities to help you want to learn.
- You like school, you enjoy being there, you work hard and you behave well.
- You treat each other and adults very well and get on with everyone fine, whatever their backgrounds.
- Many of you take on responsibilities and carry them out well.
- You have a good understanding of what being healthy means. Most of you eat well and take part in some form of physical exercise.
- The school is very safe and adults take very good care of you.

To improve things, we have asked the school to do the following:

- Raise standards by the end of Key Stage 2, especially in numeracy.
- Make sure that work is always hard enough for the most able of you, and that it is interesting so that everyone is involved in learning.
- Make sure that you always know how well you are doing in your work, what your targets are and what you need to do to reach them.

You can help in several ways. If work is not hard enough, tell the teacher. Try to become involved in your work. If you are not sure how well you are doing or how to improve your work, say so. Finally, those of you who are often absent, come to school regularly – learning now will help you in the future!

Yours faithfully

Ted Wheatley

Lead inspector