

Stirchley Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103264
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323786
Inspection date	29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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)	189
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	William Evans
Headteacher	Kate Basterfield
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pershore Road Birmingham B30 2JL
Telephone number	01214 582989
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the school's initiatives to raise standards, particularly in writing
- how well teachers use assessment information to match work to ensure all pupils do as well as they should
- the impact of leadership at all levels in improving standards.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, the school's assessment records, observation of the school at work, discussions with staff, parents and governors, and an analysis of parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, are not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Stirchley is a smaller-than-average primary school. Just under half of the pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. An above average proportion of the pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include challenging behaviour, moderate learning difficulties, and speech, language and communication difficulties. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time is much higher than normal.

The Early Years Foundation Stage Unit caters for 26 Nursery-aged children and 23 Reception-aged children. In April 2006 the unit achieved the Early Years Quality Mark (Gold standard).

The school has won many awards for its work, including the Healthy School Standard for the third time in 2008 and the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the fourth time in 2008. It has also achieved an Activemark in 2006, 2007 and 2008 for exceptional delivery within the National School Sport Strategy. The school gained the Financial Management Standard in April 2008.

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. It ensures that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well and enjoy their education. Pupils' enthusiasm for lessons and their high regard for their teachers show in the confident and proud way they talk about their school. One pupil considers it to be the 'perfect place'. The school provides excellent levels of pastoral care and works very effectively to remove barriers to learning. Safeguarding procedures are very good and fully meet current requirements, which keeps pupils safe and reassures parents. The school is effective in promoting equality of opportunity. Parents recognise and appreciate the school's commitment to welcoming all pupils, including those who have complex needs and those who have been excluded from other schools. One parent writes, 'My child is much happier since joining Stirchley. The school is very aware of our problems and staff talk to us in a polite and positive way. There is no negativity and my child's behaviour and work has improved considerably.'

Children are given a good and very happy education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is an effective emphasis on developing children's early communication and social skills, which results in good achievement, although standards remain below the expected levels on entry to Year 1. Children begin school with limited personal development but all staff rapidly establish very positive relationships to enhance this throughout the school. Consequently pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. They enjoy numerous sports activities at lunchtime and after school and are very proud of their excellent five-a-side football team. Pupils say everyone is treated equally and fairly and bullying is 'very rare'. They love taking responsibility and the school council has been very involved in creating a 'Reflection Room'. They researched designs and colours as well as ordering the furniture. Attendance is average and the school has very rigorous procedures to ensure pupils attend regularly.

All pupils make good progress through Key Stage 1 and 2 so that standards by the time they leave the school are average overall and below average in writing. This represents good achievement from pupils' lower starting points, and prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. In 2008, Year 6 pupils' test results were below those generally reached by the school in recent years. This was because this group of pupils had significant academic, social and behavioural needs and many had joined the school late in their primary education. Although these pupils reached and many exceeded their challenging targets, many pupils did not reach national averages. Current Year 6 pupils are performing at a higher level and standards are predicted to be higher in 2009 tests. The support for the large number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good; their needs are quickly and accurately identified and they make as good progress as other pupils. An intensive pastoral support programme provides effective help for children whose behavioural or emotional needs cause concern. The language needs of those who speak English as an additional language are carefully assessed and they receive effective support. They learn quickly to speak English and make good progress. Setting accurate end of Key Stage targets is very difficult for the school because of the mobility of its learners. However, tracking data show that those pupils who remain at the school for their entire primary education make good progress and achieve well. The good progress that pupils make reflects the effective teaching. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their learning and work hard. All staff have very good relationships with pupils and use effective strategies to maintain a purposeful learning environment. They capture pupils' attention, give them confidence and ensure a good pace to learning. Consequently pupils behave well and discuss their work sensibly. Good use is made of specialist literacy and numeracy teaching in Years 5 and 6. This strategy

has had a beneficial impact on raising standards, although standards in writing lag behind other areas. This is mainly because some pupils find combining accurate spelling, neat handwriting and punctuation into an interesting piece of writing difficult. In most lessons work is carefully matched to pupils' various abilities. Staff skillfully share learning intentions and outcomes with the pupils but not all teachers involve pupils sufficiently in their learning by identifying the next steps for them. Marking also varies and in some cases is supportive but does not show pupils how they can improve their work.

The good curriculum is planned carefully and adapted to suit pupils' interests and abilities. Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils love their weekly French lessons and demonstrate considerable ability and fluency in speaking another language. Raising pupils' self-esteem is a high priority and the curriculum successfully promotes pupils' social, emotional and personal development. The school is situated in a diverse multicultural area and utilises the strengths of the pupils' backgrounds and the expertise of families to enliven the curriculum and promote successful learning about different faiths, races and cultures. This effective promotion of community cohesion is also seen in good relationships between pupils, the very close partnership with parents and the close links with the local community. There are good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in the wide range of exciting clubs and enrichment activities.

Good leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is evident in careful and accurate evaluation of every aspect of the school's performance, which leads to considered and effective action. This is illustrated well by recent improvements to mathematics teaching and learning and the introduction of several initiatives to raise standards in writing which are beginning to bear fruit. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive and are successfully developing their monitoring role. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in terms of revised and effective ways of tracking pupils' progress so that all staff can make good use of assessment data to raise standards. Senior leaders ensure that the enthusiastic subject leaders play a full role in monitoring and evaluating their subjects. Staff work well together and demonstrate a good capacity to improve the school even further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

There is a strong team spirit amongst the Early Years Foundation Stage staff, who successfully provide good quality early years education. Interesting role-play areas and enthusiastic adults, acting as play partners, enhance children's language and personal skills effectively. Teaching is good and the curriculum is very well planned to ensure that children of all ages and abilities are included and challenged. The indoor learning environment is very bright and colourful, with high quality displays, resources and activities to interest and engage children. Staff are involved in an action research project to ensure that this exciting indoor environment is replicated outdoors. Some activities currently take place outdoors but they are not yet an integral part of children's learning. There is a good balance between those activities led by the staff and those that children choose for themselves. From low starting levels all children make good progress, although standards in all the areas of learning are below the expected levels at the start of Year 1. Children achieve particularly well in their personal, emotional and social development. With sensitive and loving support they gradually learn to become independent learners. A strong emphasis on the development of basic skills, such as phonics, helps children's early reading and writing skills develop well. A good partnership is quickly established with parents, who are very happy with all aspects of the unit. This is because the care and attention given to children's welfare is good. Effective leadership and management are demonstrated by

a shared sense of purpose, highly effective teamwork, and a constant drive to improve all aspects of the provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of all pupils in writing by raising standards in spelling, handwriting and punctuation.
- Make sure pupils have clear information about how well they are doing and have clear guidance on the next steps in their learning.
- Develop the curriculum and facilities to improve outdoor learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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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 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?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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**

30 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Stirchley Community School, Birmingham, B30 2JL

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. We were impressed by how friendly you all are and by how much you enjoy your lessons. A particular highlight for me was seeing how good the Year 5 pupils are at speaking French.

You told us that you think your school is good and that teachers are very helpful. We agree with you. All the staff take very good care of you and that helps you to feel safe. It also gives you the confidence to try hard with your work.

These are the things we liked best.

- Your behaviour is good and you are keen and eager to learn new things.
- You are all doing well in lessons.
- You enjoy the healthy school meals and all the many sporting activities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make learning interesting and enjoyable for you.
- Anyone who needs help with work or speaking English is always given it.
- Your headteacher is good at leading and managing the school.

The headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make the school even better. We agree with their ideas. We have suggested that it would be good if they make sure you do as well in your writing as you do in reading and mathematics. We have asked the teachers to be sure that you are always clear about how well you are doing and how you can improve your work. We also think that the Nursery and Reception children could have more outdoor activities.

We are really glad you enjoy your school and wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox

Lead inspector