

Water Mill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103326
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323800
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	167
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	Steve Pratt
Headteacher	Jennifer Edginton
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Water Mill Close Selly Oak Birmingham B29 6TS
Telephone number	01214 647769
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a little smaller in size than most other schools and has slightly more boys than girls. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very high. Just over half of all pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic groups. Of these, over one third speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly behavioural, emotional and social or speech and language difficulties, is much higher than is typically found. A very high number of pupils join the school at intermittent times throughout the school year. There is one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Water Mill is an outstanding school where pupils from all backgrounds receive an 'all-round' education. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school and have great confidence in the headteacher. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and confirm that they are very happy and extremely well cared for. They say, 'It is one big family here. We are all treated equally, no one is better than anyone else.'

When children start in the EYFS, their skills are well below the levels expected. They get off to a good start and make good progress because there is a very strong focus on developing children's social and communication skills. This focus results in improved standards that are close to those expected at the end of the EYFS. By the end of Year 6, standards have risen considerably and are significantly above average. This represents outstanding progress. In 2007, the school was in the top 1% of schools nationally for the progress made by pupils. In particular, those who have been at the school for a long time do very well. By the end of Year 6, standards are significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. In art and music, standards are particularly high, pupils take part in a good range of sports and they adopt healthy lifestyles. The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, provides outstanding leadership which is at the heart of this very effective school. In addition to the very strong leadership, there are many interlinking features that contribute to pupils' outstanding achievement. An exceptionally varied curriculum inspires pupils to work hard and gain a very wide range of skills. Pupils' personal development is outstanding, especially their social, moral and cultural development. Very good relationships and exemplary care, guidance and support result in happy learners who overcome any difficulties quickly. Outstanding teaching leads to many examples of excellent learning, as does the very wide range of clubs, visits and extra activities. The school provides very well for pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties. As a result, they make excellent progress. Pupils play their full part too. They come to school ready to learn and are eager to contribute to lessons. Their exemplary behaviour means that lessons are rarely disrupted and can be conducted at a good pace and in a positive climate.

Pupils' knowledge of different cultures in the diverse society in which we live is strong because community cohesion is an excellent feature of the school. Staff have created a school in which all pupils get on well together. All groups of pupils consistently make valuable contributions to life in school and the wider community. Many parents, however, against the very strong advice of the school, take pupils away for extended holidays in term time, which means attendance is only at the national average.

The headteacher and her senior team rigorously monitor all areas of the school's work and this results in sustained improvements to teaching, learning and the standards achieved by learners. Governors hold the school to account well for its work. The school uses its resources and accommodation imaginatively and efficiently and offers outstanding value for money. There is a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has already been achieved. The school knows exactly what to do further to sustain its excellence and so the capacity to further improve is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent provision for the Reception class enables children to achieve very well and develop good independence. Children enjoy their learning, especially their sessions in the 'Early Reading Research' (ERR) programme, which is rapidly boosting their speaking and reading skills. The development of children's personal and social skills is outstanding. Good teamwork and rigorous assessment arrangements support children effectively, helping them to gain confidence and to learn school routines quickly. Consequently, children make rapid progress so that by the time they reach Year 1 they are working at broadly expected levels. Relationships between adults and children are outstanding. The class is composed of many children from different backgrounds, cultures and languages, which are frequently changing, and they work and play together in complete harmony. The outstanding behaviour is a result of the high expectations and the welcoming, calm environment. The highly effective leadership and management of the EYFS mean that leaders are fully aware of the strengths and areas they wish to develop. They have created a vibrant, stimulating learning situation both indoors and outside. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with English as an additional language, are identified early, their progress is closely monitored and support is introduced when necessary. The impact of outstanding provision and teaching is that the children are happy, enthusiastic learners.

What the school should do to improve further

- Build on existing strategies to reduce authorised absence and so ensure better attendance at school of all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. When children join the EYFS many have limited language and communication skills and weak mathematical knowledge. They make good progress in the EYFS. As a result of outstanding teaching, careful tracking of progress and a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, pupils' progress accelerates in Years 3 to 6 and standards are significantly above average. Pupils produce high quality art and music and these enrich their 'all-round' achievement very well. Standards fluctuate from year to year because of variations in the numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and the high incidence of pupils joining and leaving the school at intermittent times throughout the year. However, the rate of improvement in standards has been much faster than that seen nationally. There is very little difference in the progress made by the various groups of pupils in the school. This is because the school works very effectively to support pupils with learning difficulties and those who enter the school with particularly low levels of attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school and are excited by all that it has to offer. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflecting the school's strong commitment to principles of 'Respect and Choice'. Pupils report an absence of bullying and racism and relish their involvement in many cultural activities. For example, pupils enjoy and value the many theatre visits, such as a recent performance of the Royal Ballet. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, and they are polite

and respectful. The focus on social skills starts very well in the EYFS, where children learn how to concentrate, listen, explore new things and work and play successfully with others. They respect and care for each other, their work and the high quality creative displays seen around the school. Regular attendance is encouraged and rewarded but annual school attendance is not as good as it could be. Children from many and varied backgrounds, faiths and languages are welcomed and nurtured by everyone. By the time they leave, pupils' well above average literacy and numeracy and their outstanding personal skills mean they are equipped exceptionally well for the next phase of their education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Learning is good in the EYFS because teachers are good at recognising the needs of each individual child. In Years 1 to 6, sustained challenge and high expectations enable pupils to achieve well above average standards and make exceptional progress. Pupils are enthusiastic and work hard because activities are fun. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts are clearly explained and activities are carefully designed to challenge the pupils to learn at a swift pace. Pupils' levels of enjoyment and motivation are high because there is mutual respect between them and their teachers. Adults ask challenging questions and these help pupils to think and use more varied vocabulary in their answers. Teachers take care to ensure that pupils know exactly what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve. Teaching assistants are very effective in their work. All pupils, whatever their learning needs, are fully included in the activities and this has a positive effect on achievement and personal development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The carefully planned curriculum contributes strongly to pupils' learning. Pupils value the diversity of their community because there is an emphasis on celebrating multicultural and cultural aspects in school. This makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The school ensures that learning is meaningful because it carefully plans themes with strong links between subjects. There is a strong focus on English and much discussion work is linked to helping pupils with their writing. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) across subjects is good and the use of laptop computers in classes makes a strong contribution to pupils' high achievements. There is an excellent focus on using visits to widen pupils' life experiences. In particular, the arts and music are very well promoted. The school provides pupils with a wide variety of sporting activities as part of the school day. These, together with well supported creative and educational activities outside the normal school day, make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, their levels of enjoyment and their personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents agree that children are looked after very well. Induction programmes are outstanding for those who arrive throughout the year and those starting in the EYFS. Child protection procedures are rigorous and the care for vulnerable pupils is outstanding. Excellent links with

specialists help pupils with their learning, social skills and emotional development. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language is especially strong and helps them to achieve very well. Staff know the pupils very well and make effective use of assessment information to track and check pupils' progress, so that extra support can be provided if pupils need it. As a result, pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are set clear learning targets, which they confirm are helping them to improve. Parents' knowledge of pupils' targets helps to secure support from home.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides strong, vigorous and intelligent leadership. Her skill in promoting the clear ethos of the school underpins pupils' outstanding progress. She engenders loyalty amongst staff, who work with clarity and enthusiasm in meeting the school's high expectations for pupils' success. As a result, staff morale is strikingly high and there is a very real sense of teamwork and collaboration in the school and a clear sense of direction. Leaders have created a school which is a harmonious environment in which pupils of all races and cultures get on well together.

Senior leaders work effectively to improve the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. Subject leaders manage their areas well and their rigorous monitoring is leading to rapidly improving standards. The governing body provides good support. Governors know the school well and ask challenging questions about what goes on. The school improvement plan is comprehensive and shows clearly how improving the effectiveness of leadership and teaching and learning is at the heart of all it does. The school has an accurate view of its work, although several of the judgements in the school's self-evaluation are too modest.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	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
The extent to which 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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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**

16 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Water Mill Primary School, Birmingham, B29 6TS

- Thank you all for the warm welcome you gave to your inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you. I would like to say a special thank you to the school council and those of you from Years 5 and 6 who gave up part of your lunchtime in order to meet us. Water Mill Primary School is an outstanding school. It has many excellent features and we know you are very proud of it. Here are some of the good things about your school.
- You make outstanding progress in your lessons and results in national tests are far higher than in most schools.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you get on well with your fellow pupils. Water Mill is a well ordered school and you look after each other.
- You show a great enjoyment in your learning and know a lot about the importance of staying healthy and keeping safe.
- Teaching is excellent and your teachers are very skilful and concerned to make sure that you do as well as you can.
- The care, support and guidance that the school offers you is outstanding and it means that everyone can do well.
- Your headteacher and other senior staff are excellent leaders and know exactly how to make Water Mill Primary School even better. What we have asked your school to do now.
- Make sure that fewer of you take time off school during term time so that your attendance gets even better. Thank you once again for making such a helpful contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed watching you learn.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant Lead inspector