

Boldmere Junior School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	103341
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323804
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Darby
Headteacher	Carl Glasgow
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
School address	Cofield Road Sutton Coldfield B73 5SD
Telephone number	0121 464 3656
Fax number	0121 605 9355

Age group	7–11
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a larger than average junior school. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is just below average and few speak English as an additional language. The school has been awarded a Healthy Schools Award, Artsmark Gold, Activemark Gold, a bronze Eco Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008. The Busy Bodies before and after school club is managed by the governing body and only provides for pupils who attend this school and the neighbouring infant school. This includes providing for children who are under five through provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 that is rapidly improving. Parents are absolutely delighted with the changes that have occurred recently, including the vast improvement in the appearance of the school and the strengthening of discipline. Many parents say that the recently appointed headteacher has made a 'huge difference' and talk about the 'new sense of vision and purpose'. The energy and determination of the new leader has certainly created a tangible team spirit where governors, staff and pupils work hard together and eagerly take on new ideas. The headteacher has identified where the school needs to improve and responded with well thought out plans that are starting to be implemented. However, middle leaders, although keen and enthusiastic, have still to fully develop their management skills so that they can identify more precisely what needs to be done to boost standards and achievement in their areas of responsibility. Consequently, leadership and management are both satisfactory overall.

When the pupils join the school in Year 3, their standards are above average, and they are still above average when they leave at the end of Year 6. Although standards are above average, more pupils reach the higher Level 5 in mathematics and science than in English. This is because standards in writing are only average. Pupils' progress is satisfactory, but they make better progress in reading, mathematics and science than in writing. While teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, they are quickly improving with an increasing proportion of lively lessons that enthuse the pupils. Occasionally, teachers spend too long introducing lessons and this limits pupils' opportunities for working independently and practising their skills. Work is not always carefully matched to pupils' abilities; as a result, it can be too difficult for lower attaining pupils and the more able pupils mark time. Nevertheless, the school's commitment to equality of opportunity is evident and the school is becoming more inclusive as support mechanisms improve.

Care, guidance and support are good and successfully promote pupils' good personal development and well-being. Parents say that staff could not be more 'helpful, caring and supportive' when problems arise. The good attention paid to personal, social and health education ensures that pupils are extremely well informed about how to stay healthy and safe. Safeguarding requirements are met. The Busy Bodies Before and After School group ensures that the children in its care are well looked after and have access to an interesting range of activities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and this is illustrated by their good behaviour and the way they work so well together. Pupils' obvious enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance rates. The curriculum has improved and is now good. A particular strength is the very wide range of enrichment opportunities and extra-curricular activities that expand pupils' experiences and make a good contribution to their personal development. These are further enhanced by active partnerships with other schools and good use of local facilities and resources. The partnership with the neighbouring infant school is rapidly developing and is helping to raise expectations in the juniors. The recent improvements to progress in mathematics and the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in science illustrate the school's satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing.

- Make certain that teachers do not spend too much time introducing lessons, give pupils sufficient opportunities to work independently, and ensure that work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and needs.
- Develop the skills of middle managers so that they are able to identify more precisely what needs to be done to boost achievement and raise standards.

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

Although progress is satisfactory overall, it is uneven through Years 3 to 6 with pupils making better progress in some classes than others. There are also significant variations in pupils' progress in different subjects as they move through the school. Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved this year but progress in writing has not improved at the same rate. Standards are above average overall and there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in science. However, standards are held back in English because, although pupils do well in their reading, their standards in writing are only average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress but their achievement is starting to accelerate because of improved support. For example, a recent reading recovery programme has boosted the progress of Year 4 pupils who were finding reading challenging. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make the same satisfactory progress as other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Strong moral and social development underpins pupils' good behaviour. They have developed a clear sense of right and wrong. Good manners, respect and appropriate behaviour are high on the agenda of the new headteacher and this is fully reflected in the way pupils behave in class and around school. Pupils work hard in lessons, especially when they have the opportunity to work independently. Pupils are developing a real pride in their school as they see the positive changes that are enhancing their experiences. They are keen to contribute to the school and local community and the work of the school council is much improved. Fund-raising is very important to the pupils and they often raise a significant amount to help others who are less fortunate than themselves. At present, they are eagerly raising funds for picnic blankets for use in the school grounds. Pupils develop an exceptionally good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They make healthy choices of food and participate enthusiastically in sports and after-school clubs. They know how to keep safe. They say that bullying is now rare and they are very confident that staff will sort out any small problems that might arise. Confidence and positive attitudes to learning, combined with above average standards in basic skills, ensure that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and there are an increasing proportion of good lessons with some outstanding teaching in Year 6. Staff are enthusiastically taking on board advice from the headteacher but these new ways of working have not yet become fully embedded in the practice of all of the staff. Some teachers talk for too long at the beginning of lessons and, as a result, pupils can become restless and have insufficient time to practise their skills. Work is not always matched well enough to pupils' needs. This is particularly true in mathematics when pupils are broadly set by ability. The most able and the lower attaining pupils within the group are sometimes set the same work. As a result, the lower attaining pupils struggle and the most able make insufficient progress because the work is not challenging enough for them. Very good relationships between pupils and staff give pupils confidence. Staff are increasingly skilled at managing behaviour. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together, including the use of 'talk partners', which enhances their personal development as they learn to collaborate. Teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to add interest to the lesson and reinforce learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The balance of the curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection and pupils now have ample opportunity to study a broad range of subjects. The much improved links with the neighbouring infant school are helping to promote continuity, and raise teachers' expectations of pupils when they join the school in Year 3. More activities and resources of particular interest to boys have been provided to support boys' achievement in reading and writing. There are particular strengths in the provision for information and communication technology, physical education, music and a good emphasis on practical learning in science. The school is aware that even more could be done to promote links between subjects and increase pupils' opportunities to write at length on a range of topics.

There are lots of interesting activities that enrich the core curriculum and successfully promote pupils' personal development. There are a good variety of curriculum days that help pupils explore history and recently there was a particularly successful Black History week. Pupils enthusiastically embrace the very wide range of opportunities for sport and there is a good choice of after-school clubs. Pupils who stay at the Busy Bodies before and after school club have access to a wide variety of activities that are designed to meet their interests. The provision for those children who are under five at these sessions is improving as the staff enhance their understanding of how young children learn. Although the curriculum is particularly good at promoting pupils' personal development, it is too early for all these improvements to have had a substantial effect on their progress in learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a warm, compassionate environment where pupils' personal needs are well supported. Consequently, pupils are very happy in school and are able to settle to learning positively. Pupils' personal requirements are well known to staff and pupils' progress meetings

are making staff increasingly aware of those who are in danger of falling behind academically. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are struggling with their work is improving because the school has recently introduced a greater range of intervention programmes. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported and this help is being enhanced by the recent appointment of a learning mentor. Pupils who attend the before and after school club are well cared for and their welfare requirements are met. Academic guidance, although satisfactory, is quickly improving. Teachers are working hard at developing their marking so it gives pupils a much clearer indication of how to improve their work. However, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of marking and occasionally simple errors in pupils' writing are not identified and more able pupils are congratulated on their writing but not told how to make it even better. Academic targets are beginning to be used effectively, particularly in writing, but have not had time to have a full impact on their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has quickly gained the overwhelming support of pupils, parents, staff and governors because he leads by example and is a highly visible presence in the school. Everyone involved with the school is determined to improve the standard of their work. He is empowering other leaders in the school and, as a result, they are very keen and enthusiastic but still have to fully develop their skills. Although the headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate, middle leaders are not as good at evaluating the school's work. They are starting to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning in their subjects but their judgements need to be more precise in order to pinpoint specific areas for improvement and to help the staff to take effective action. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school is reaching out more efficiently to the local community, including parents and other local schools, but more needs to be done to extend pupils' opportunities to meet others with different backgrounds from themselves. Governors are very supportive and their ability to challenge is being improved because they are being provided with better quality information about the work of the school. However, they need to be more aware of their responsibilities concerning the before and after School club. Nevertheless, the club itself is very well managed and this is reflected in the steady improvement to the good service it provides.

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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?	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	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	2

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?	2

Leadership and management

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	3
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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

30 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Boldmere Junior School, Sutton Coldfield B73 5SD

Thank you for being so friendly and polite when we came to inspect your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and listened very carefully to what you had to say. I am writing to tell you what we found out. You are becoming proud of your school because the corridors and classrooms are very bright and cheerful because of all the displays of your work and the interesting activities you have been involved in. Your school is satisfactory and it is getting better all the time. We were pleased to see that you all behave well and work hard in class. Your parents have told us that your behaviour has improved a lot and they are pleased about that. You know how to keep fit and healthy and you enjoy your physical education and sport. Congratulations on your win at your local athletics tournament. You must have been thrilled; it's a great achievement. It is really good that you are able to learn how to play the violin, brass instruments and have lots of interesting visits and visitors. The annual trip to France sounds very exciting.

You are making satisfactory progress which is now improving. The standards you reach are higher than those reached by pupils in other schools but we think that you could do even better in your writing where your standards need improving. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but improving, and many of your lessons now help you to learn more quickly. We did notice that in a few lessons you had to listen to the teacher for too long and did not have enough chance to practise your skills. We have asked your teachers to improve this, together with the quality of your writing, and to make sure that you always get work to do that is not too hard or too easy for each of you.

You told us that the staff look after you very well and we agree. The people who run your school do a satisfactory job. They are working very hard indeed and trying to make your school a better place. We have asked some of them to improve their management skills so that they can help your headteacher even more.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh

Lead inspector