

Maidensbridge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103779
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	323895
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Pitt HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Dave Tyler
Headteacher	Andy Hale
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 January 2006
School address	Beachcroft Road Kingswinford DY6 0HX
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 14 lessons, and held meetings with parents, governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documents, pupils' work, and questionnaires from 22 members of staff and 105 parents. The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- provision, standards and achievement in English
- provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the progress they make
- the effectiveness of the new skills-based approach to the curriculum.

Information about the school

Since the last inspection, the school has successfully fought closure. It is oversubscribed. Pupils aged four and five, who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), are educated in the Reception class. Others are taught in single age classes. The school has achieved Healthy School Status, Eco-School Green Flag Status, Activemark and the Becta information and communication technology mark.

The school hosts a before and after school club. This was inspected separately.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	198	average
Free school meals	8.6%	below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	10.2%	below average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	2.4%	below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	1.2%	below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0.5%	below average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Children enter it with standards that are fairly typical for their age. They gain a great deal on their journey through the school and leave it as well-educated 11-year-olds who reach high standards. Much is achieved collectively by the pupils, staff, parents and governors. There is a real sense of purpose and community. Many parents remarked on the school's 'family atmosphere'. Children are at the centre of the school and encouraged to do well regardless of their ability. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the good teaching. They behave well and thrive in a secure and caring environment. Their knowledge of how to keep fit and healthy is excellent. Children in Reception benefit from being taught effectively in the new outdoor environment. Work on the indoor provision is developing. All staff strive to improve and recognise that assessment, target setting and promoting independent learning are good, but that they are not yet used consistently throughout the school. The school is strongly led and the process of self-evaluation is well embedded. Rigorous checking of performance takes place, although there is scope to involve a greater number of staff and governors in sharing the load. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is good. Since the last inspection there has been:

- year on year improvement in Year 6 test results showing that pupils make good progress
- rigorous tracking of pupils' achievement in classes, with the headteacher taking decisive action to address any inadequacy
- imaginative development of the school building and grounds enabling better provision for the youngest pupils and those with disabilities, and increased achievement in science, physical development and economic well-being
- greater involvement in multicultural activities which is just starting to influence pupils' understanding of national and international issues.

All in all, the school provides an effective learning environment in which pupils do well and succeed.

What does the school need to do to become outstanding?

- Improve teaching and learning even more by:
 - sharing existing good practice across the school
 - making better use of assessment to plan lessons
 - ensuring teachers consistently set individual targets for pupils
 - planning more lessons that encourage pupils to learn independently.
- Involve a greater number of staff and governors in checking and evaluating the work of the school.
- Develop the already good curriculum so that it helps pupils to know about and understand the way other people live, especially those from different cultures.
- Improve the indoor provision for the youngest pupils so that it matches the good provision outdoors.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Since the last inspection, standards have risen steadily. In 2006, results showed that 11-year-olds were slightly behind in the progress they made. Now they are a term and a half in front. Currently, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and rising. This is due to the relentless analysis of the learning of individuals and different groups of pupils (boys, girls, class groups, and pupils with learning difficulties) and ensuring that swift action is taken to stop pupils falling behind. Pupils who find work difficult make good progress because they are skilfully taught in small groups, sometimes in their classrooms and sometimes separately. Pupils remarked that this works well and that they are not made to feel inferior.

The school's caring ethos and robust safeguarding procedures help pupils feel safe and free from harassment. Parents and pupils say that bullying and name-calling are rare and that adults deal with these issues quickly if they occur. Attendance figures are good and pupils enjoy school due to the warm and friendly atmosphere in which they learn. The behaviour seen during the inspection was good and it is positively encouraged. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of health matters and how to keep fit and healthy. High and rising participation rates in sports teams and extra-curricular activities are testament to this. Pupils spoke appreciatively of the improvements to school meals and parents remarked how this had positively influenced healthy eating habits at home.

Pupils take on responsibility maturely, for example by having their say at the school council, engaging in fund raising and ensuring that eco matters such as switching off lights and recycling rubbish are keenly promoted. Given that pupils contribute so well to their immediate community, they do not yet have a good awareness of national and international matters and cultures other than their own.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

The majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good. Typically, staff have high expectations of behaviour which encourages a strong work ethic. Pupils buckle down to tasks enthusiastically and concentrate well. Lessons are well structured and are most successful when pupils learn by doing. This was seen in science, where pupils were able to experiment and discuss answers to questions in pairs or small groups, for example 'Which is the strongest magnet?' and 'How do we filter solids from liquids to make them clean?' The school is aware that lessons such as these, that promote independent learning, need to be more widespread. Occasionally, lessons are too limiting, for instance when tasks set only allow the writing of one sentence when the pupils are capable of much more or when pupils finish quickly and do not have follow-on tasks to do.

The inspection focused on the school's provision for English. This was found to be good because teachers have good subject knowledge, use questioning skilfully and encourage pupils to use interesting and descriptive vocabulary. Teachers mark pupils' writing regularly and make helpful comments in their books. These effectively identify the strengths and weaknesses of the work and pinpoint what needs to improve. Teachers keep detailed records of how individual pupils in Key Stage 2 are progressing, and these are being developed for younger pupils. This assessment information is not always used consistently by all teachers to plan future lessons or to set precise targets for all pupils.

The school delivers an enriching and varied curriculum which is effective in promoting the skills needed for later life. A walk around the school during the inspection revealed: younger pupils enjoying number rhymes; seven-year-olds providing a creative musical accompaniment to a video of their own paintings; Year 3 engaged in scientific computer games; Year 5 dancing to Indian music; Year 6

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

evaluating models made from paper and tubes; and pupils in the corridor sorting packaging to recycle. Additionally, pupils said that they felt well prepared for secondary school through learning to speak German and their achievements in literacy and numeracy.

Pupils are well cared for and supported. A great strength of the school is the way in which those with learning difficulties are helped to build self-esteem and to progress well. This is due to the school's keenness to work closely with parents, carers and outside agencies, and to provide sensitive and targeted support when it is needed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a concerted drive from the headteacher, staff, parents and governors to move the school forward. Since the last inspection, there has been good investment in systems to enable the headteacher and assessment coordinator to track pupil progress effectively. This information is shared with parents and pupils and is used to target support, resulting in better standards. Careful management of the school budget has enabled the school to enhance staffing so that the needs of older pupils in mathematics are met effectively through ability group teaching.

The school takes parents' views seriously. Consequently, school meals and extra-curricular activities have also improved. Parents reported that school lunches now offer vegetarian, salad and fruit options and that the number and variety of school clubs on offer have increased. The staff are also very positive about the school and feel extremely valued in their roles. Comments on the questionnaires noted that good leadership helps them know what is expected. The headteacher is reviewing the management responsibilities of the staff in order to share the load of monitoring and evaluating the school's work.

Discussion with governors showed that they visit the school regularly and that the headteacher keeps them well informed of school developments. They take the pupils' welfare seriously and, at the time of the inspection, all statutory safeguarding requirements were in place. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but do not yet formally evaluate the policies for which they are responsible. They have worked with the headteacher to improve multicultural education and are now ready to put in place a strategy to promote community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	3
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a competent start in the Reception class. Experienced leadership of the EYFS ensures that the children are well cared for so that they settle quickly. Children achieve particularly well in personal and social development. They learn how to share and take turns and are encouraged to work cooperatively, for example when building a tall tower from large bricks and trying hard not to make it topple over.

Effective teaching outdoors helps the children to learn successfully. The environment is vibrant and interesting. Children work with sustained interest and effort as they play number games using the playground markings. They dress up in police hats and act out their own crime stories and play in the sand. Their physical development is enhanced by riding and steering bikes around a track.

Indoors, the work is more formal as children learn steadily to write their name, sing songs and listen to stories attentively. Plans are in hand to work with the local authority to extend the opportunities for creative play and provide an approach to the EYFS curriculum which balances child-initiated and adult-led activities.

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?*	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?*	3
How effectively is the welfare of the children in the EYFS promoted?*	2
How effectively is the provision in the EYFS led and managed?*	3

* Common judgements made across all inspections of the EYFS

Views of parents and carers

About 50% of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Responses show that there is a high level of satisfaction with the school. An overwhelming majority identify that their children are happy at school and enjoy attending. Families new to the school mentioned its welcoming approach. Most respondents think the school is well led and managed and note that good teaching helps their children learn successfully. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the before and after school club. A few questionnaires raised concerns but these were related to individual matters rather than whole-school issues.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



28 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Maidensbridge Primary School, Kingswinford, DY6 0HX

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

These are the best things about your school.

- You enjoy school, and do well in English, mathematics and science.
- You really know how to keep fit and healthy.
- You get on well with each other and your behaviour is good.
- Adults take good care of you so that you feel happy and safe in school.
- Lessons are usually good.
- There are lots of after school activities.
- The headteacher, staff and governors are very keen to help your school get even better.

What I have asked your school to do now.

- Make lessons even more interesting.
- Teach you about the way other people live, especially those from different cultures.
- Involve more adults in checking how well the school helps you improve.

You are very lucky that you go to such a good school where everyone gets on very well. I hope that you will do your best to make it even better.

Yours sincerely

Anne Pitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

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