

# Bearwood Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103933
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	323927
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Simms

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	492
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	112
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Eling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patrice Meredith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Bearwood Road Smethwick B66 4HB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 344499
<b>Fax number</b>	01214 344799

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 October 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Located in the centre of Smethwick, this large, two-form entry, urban primary school serves an area of high socio-economic deprivation. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than usual. Over half the pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. The proportion of younger pupils who come from the Pakistani community has increased significantly of late, but across the school, the range of languages and ethnic backgrounds represented is very wide. The number of pupils entering and leaving the school part-way through their primary education is much higher than usual. A high proportion of staff are new to the school this year. At the time of inspection, an acting headteacher and interim management team were in post, pending the appointment of a new headteacher. The school holds the ICT Mark, a Healthy Schools Gold award and the Active Mark. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) includes both Nursery and Reception Years.

## 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. Pupils strongly confirm inspection findings that 'learning is fun' here. From the very start of their schooling, pupils from a wide range of backgrounds behave well, working and playing happily together in an extremely harmonious, friendly atmosphere. They make good progress in their academic studies and in personal and social skills, welcoming newcomers and visitors with friendly, open confidence. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. The school has improved significantly, particularly during this academic year, when the recent hard work of the acting headteacher, the staff team, governors and school advisors has begun to show good results.

From a satisfactory position at its last inspection, the school has moved forward to become a good school in all its aspects. Teaching and learning, for instance, are now good, with some previously unsatisfactory practice eliminated as a result of close monitoring and subsequent action. Highly effective recruitment procedures have resulted in very discerning new appointments, and there is now a buzz of enthusiasm among staff as they see pupils' progress improve. While there remain some gaps in learning as a result of previous weaker teaching, staff now identify these swiftly through good assessment and tracking, intervening quickly with modified teaching to rectify shortfalls. Senior staff know the school well, but have been so 'close to the action' that evaluation of recent improvements is somewhat modest. Good leadership and management have identified accurately areas that require improvement. These include the need to challenge more able pupils consistently well across the school, building on the good practice which exists in Year 6 and more recently in the Nursery.

Provision and outcomes in EYFS are good. From well below the age-related expectations when they enter the school, pupils make good progress to Year 6, so standards in English, mathematics, science and other subjects are average by the time they leave. Standards in writing are weaker than in other subjects, despite a strong teaching focus on this area, and school analysis has properly identified negative attitudes towards writing amongst boys. A new scheme designed to improve this motivation is being implemented across the school, but it is too early to evaluate its impact.

A good, well-balanced curriculum engages pupils' interests, and active participation in a good range of enrichment opportunities extends their experience well. These include many interesting visits, including some overseas. Safeguarding is effective and strong pastoral care and well directed support for vulnerable pupils, including those with English as an additional language (EAL) or learning difficulties, makes them feel physically and psychologically safe and secure in school. The whole environment stimulates learning well. Significant improvements to the school's academic guidance procedures place individual pupils at the very centre of learning, drawing them successfully into a dialogue with staff about progress towards their targets. While this practice is excellent in some areas of the school, it is not consistent, and the school recognises the need for further development.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Many children begin school with exceptionally low levels of skill and little or no English. They get an excellent start in the Nursery, quickly developing language and other skills which enable them to make good progress to the end of Reception. Personal and social development is

outstanding, so when they enter Year 1, although many skill levels remain below age-related expectations, children have highly positive attitudes towards learning and work together exceptionally well. Children develop good levels of independence because they have many opportunities to choose between a wide range of activities, deciding things for themselves. Every day they can choose to work indoors or outside, and are keen to explain their choice of venue and activity. They can select when to take their fruit snacks and where they settle to eat them, and on 'Funky Fridays' they can choose to work in Reception or Nursery. Staff place strong emphasis on keeping children safe, so learners understand hazards such as using matches to light their Diya candle, for instance.

Adults work well as a team, using thorough procedures to assess children's needs. Information gathered is used very carefully as the basis for planning tasks. Work therefore interests and challenges children to ensure they progress well in all areas of learning. Parents are actively involved, particularly in how they can support learning at home and some give useful help in the classroom. Good management of the EYFS includes accurate identification of strengths and priorities for development and governors have a keen understanding of this phase in the school.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve achievement in, and attitudes towards writing, particularly amongst boys.
- Improve teachers' planning in all years to challenge more able pupils towards higher levels of independence.
- In all classes, strengthen pupils' understanding of their targets and how to achieve them.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well throughout the school. Although standards remain below average at Year 2, by Year 6 attainment is average. Staff have worked hard to improve identified weaknesses in writing, though recent disappointing test results indicate that there is still work to be done. Current writing is better, influenced by a new teaching focus partly designed to foster more positive attitudes, and these are improving gradually. In most other areas, pupils are confident about their progress, and when they are older, are unusually well able to identify and describe how they can help to improve work for themselves. With improved teaching, higher standards are beginning to develop earlier on, resulting in more consistently solid foundations in all skills. Progress speeds up as language skills improve, particularly amongst pupils with English as an additional language. The high degree of commitment amongst the new staff team shows enthusiastic determination to improve learning further still.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development is good, and pupils develop excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. They actively celebrate and understand the many different cultures inherent in school life. This includes, for instance, respectful engagement in assemblies and good awareness of artwork from different countries on display. Pupils love coming to school and most absence relates to community needs such as religious observance, or extended family visits abroad. Attendance is average, but the school works very hard to minimise the effects of such constraints on pupils' learning.

Pupils actively participate in school life through the school council, gladly seizing many other opportunities to take on responsibilities. They understand healthy eating and healthy lifestyles well. Pupils regard school as a secure place, where they also learn how to keep themselves safe. In the event of bullying or racism they would know who to turn to, knowing that it would be resolved quickly and fairly.

A particular strength of the school is its outstanding contribution to community cohesion. Pupils and staff integrate very effectively with the local community and pupils value the ways in which the school prepares them for their future. Attitudes and behaviour are good, contributing well to good achievement, and pupils show mature consideration towards others.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good. Some examples of outstanding practice provide excellent models for other staff. Support and training have resolved most previous shortcomings, so most lessons are stimulating and engaging, creating interest, enjoyment and 'fun', to quote pupils' own description. Progress is enriched through learning from other pupils, because they work sensitively and cooperatively together from the earliest age.

Work is well planned to match most pupils' needs, with highly skilled support staff effectively deployed to help where required. While there is good practice in planning to challenge more able pupils, particularly in English, the school recognises that this does not always occur and is an area for improvement. Pupils' confident use of computers enhances learning significantly and staff make interesting use of interactive whiteboards. Good marking and feedback help pupils to understand how to improve their work, with older ones often engaged in lively, written dialogue with teachers as part of the assessment process. Pupils generally know their targets but more able ones are not always stretched sufficiently towards greater independence. Effective links with parents, particularly of younger pupils, create good involvement in children's learning, for example helping with interesting homework tasks in the Nursery.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum matches most pupils' needs effectively, including those whose home language is not English. However, planning to challenge more able pupils is inconsistent. Good support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to take part equally in both classroom and extra-curricular activity. A wide range of experience, including unusual enrichment such as ukulele lessons, contributes strongly to pupils' personal development. Parents value these popular clubs and a few are disappointed when they are oversubscribed. The school overcomes the limitations of a constricted, inner city location innovatively, through excellent use of its partners to increase the range of sports and physical education, for instance. These and other strong community links, such as a close, developing association with the Education Co-operative, help to overcome such difficulties well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is good, with strong safeguarding procedures in place. Detailed risk assessments for example, enable pupils to experience activities they would otherwise miss. Detailed monitoring of pupils' progress identifies where the school needs to intervene with support, and it provides for needs well. Academic guidance, while not fully consistent across the school, at its best provides a good example of teachers giving written evaluation and advice, with pupils frequently commenting on what they have done to progress as a result of this help.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The interim management team has taken strong, effective action to improve identified weaknesses. Clear educational leadership and direction underpin difficult decisions such as those that have improved teaching. Judicious budgeting has maximised the effectiveness of recent investment to improve EYFS accommodation and resources. The track record of improvement, together with new appointments and promotions, which have significantly strengthened middle leadership, demonstrates good capacity to improve the school further.

Good access to and presentation of data make information meaningful for staff and greatly assist decision-making. The school meets or exceeds its challenging targets. Governors support the school well, challenging managers with increasing effectiveness and wisdom. They have managed the task of appointing a new headteacher well, ensuring that the necessary temporary arrangements were successful.

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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?	1
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?	1
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 <sup>1</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	1
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**

27 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bearwood Primary School, Smethwick, B66 4HB

Thank you so much for your warm welcome when we came to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed our time there, talking to many of you, seeing you in your lessons and at play, and looking at your work. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

- Yours is a good school where you make good progress. You do well in English, mathematics and science, but also in other subjects like ICT. This is because teaching is good and adults plan work well to make sure you all understand your lessons.
- We were impressed with your personal development too. We like the way all pupils get on so well, working together in pairs and groups and learning from each other. We found that your friendly welcome for new pupils makes them feel happy and settled, so you all learn well together.
- You like the interesting range of things you study and the clubs on offer.
- We think that the way most teachers mark your work to give you information about what to do to improve is really helpful. We also feel that the way older pupils make comments about this advice is very good. It helps teachers to know more clearly how to help you even more.
- All adults take very good care of you, so you feel safe and secure.
- Some parents feel that the school needs a permanent headteacher but we found that the present head and senior team have improved the school well.

To make things in this good school even better and we have asked adults to do the following things.

- We feel that faster learners are not challenged to be as independent as they could be in all classes, so we have asked staff to plan better to help them with this.
- Some of you know your targets very well, especially older pupils, and know how you can help yourselves to reach these. This is not so in all classes though, so we have asked staff to make sure you do.
- Some of you, especially boys, don't enjoy writing, so you don't do as well as you could. The new 'Big Write' is helping with this, but we feel sure you can do even better in writing if you believe that you can do well. You can really help to improve this by developing the same confidence and 'can do' attitude that you show in other subjects.

Thank you again. Yours sincerely

Janet Simms Lead inspector