

St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104359
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	324030
Inspection date	21 January 2009
Reporting inspector	John Eadie

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	368
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	Beverly Clarke
Headteacher	Katharine Kent
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sedgley Road Penn Wolverhampton WV4 5LG
Telephone number	01902 558855

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	21 January 2009
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Fax number

01902 558856

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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 progress that more able pupils make in writing, to see whether the area for improvement noted at the previous inspection has been addressed effectively
- the effectiveness of targets set for pupils to improve their work
- whether any aspects of the school's work are better than the good grades that the school gives.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with leaders, a governor, pupils and staff, visits to all classes, scrutiny of pupils' work, observation of other aspects of the school day such as assembly, break and lunchtime, and analysis of parents' questionnaires and school documentation, in particular data on pupils' progress. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

St Bartholomew's is a larger than average primary school. Almost two thirds of the pupils are White British and a further quarter are of Indian heritage. The remainder represent a wide range of backgrounds. Although a small minority do not have English as their first language, very few find difficulty in coping with the demands of school life in English. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision is made in a Nursery and two Reception classes. There is a privately-managed play group and before-and-after school provision run in a separate building in the school grounds. The school building is far from ideal, but building work was going on during the inspection to improve some facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It is rare to find a school with such a sense of purpose to provide the absolute best for all its pupils. As one of the very many parents who made exceptionally positive comments about the school said, 'Everyone is geared towards success in a positive, caring atmosphere.' This drive comes from the top, where the headteacher provides exceptional leadership and this determination is communicated to, and shared extremely well by, all staff. The school knows exactly where it is going, but is not heading there in a headlong rush. Careful thought is put into all developments to ensure that they are fully effective.

The end result of this drive and ambition is that pupils consistently reach exceptionally high standards by the time they leave. A high proportion of pupils reach the higher levels in reading, mathematics and science, usually more than three quarters of them, though fewer reach this level in writing. This is a current focus for improvement for the school, which is being successful as indications are that the proportion reaching this level in writing will more than double this year, although still likely to be somewhat below the numbers in other subjects. Pupils' progress from starting points, which are somewhat above expectations for their age when they begin in Nursery, is outstanding, as is their achievement. This progress is uniform through the school, starting with excellent progress being made in the EYFS and continuing through Years 1 to 6. This excellent progress is due to the quality of teaching, which is outstanding overall. Lessons are lively and interesting with a wide variety of resources being used and activities planned. Teaching assistants make a very valuable contribution, often having responsibility for the learning of groups of more able pupils and at other times helping those who find learning more difficult.

Academic success, though very important, is not the whole story. The school recognises this and works hard to promote pupils' personal development, which results in them growing into extremely responsible, caring young people, who behave outstandingly well. As a parent typically put it, 'Children respect each other as well as the school.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy all the school has to offer. They spoke enthusiastically about many things, such as the three residential visits, unusually, one even for pupils in Year 1, the range of extra-curricular activities and the use of technology such as smart boards and laptops in the school. Pupils were excited about the prospect of science on the timetable that afternoon, because they enjoyed the experiments. Unusually, pupils, when asked for their favourite thing about school, listed a range of subjects. This is largely because of the exceptionally engaging and relevant curriculum. Music has a high priority with all pupils in Year 4 learning three different instruments during the year. A further example of innovative practice is the 'investigating languages' course that older pupils do as part of their study of modern foreign languages. Enjoyment goes right through the school, for instance a parent said, 'My child really enjoys nursery and is disappointed when he can't go at weekends.'

Pupils develop a keen awareness of how to stay healthy. For example, the take-up for the very wide range of sporting clubs and activities is high and the school council has been instrumental in providing a fruit tuck shop at break. They adopt safe practices extremely well, knowing that there are plenty of adults with whom they can confidently share any concerns. They are very well aware of the potential dangers of Internet chatrooms, though not so knowledgeable about other possible risks when using the Internet.

Pupils make a considerable contribution to the effective running of the school. Peer supporters, play leaders, junior road safety officers and those involved in producing the school newspaper all take their roles seriously and responsibly. Pupils are encouraged to be independent from an early age. For instance, children in the Nursery often plan their own learning, putting a sticker on a card to indicate their choice of activity and then talking about their learning after carrying this out. Pupils develop good working habits and work extremely well in pairs or small groups. These skills, alongside their outstanding development of basic literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, are preparing them exceptionally well for their future.

Pastoral care is outstanding. As a parent said, 'All staff treat pupils with a care and consideration that goes beyond the call of duty.' The needs of all pupils and their families are extremely well known by staff and parents are extremely complimentary about how they are involved in their children's learning and about how they are included in the support offered. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and risk assessments are particularly thorough. Academic support and guidance is exceptional. Careful records are kept of pupils' progress to identify any in danger of falling behind. These records are analysed for all groups to ensure that none is being disadvantaged. Very precise targets are set for pupils, which they have either in cards or in the relevant book. Pupils know these targets and are keen to achieve them, which makes a considerable impact on their progress. Teachers' marking is excellent as they often refer to these targets and give pupils very clear guidance about what they need to learn next. Pupils are fully involved in this process, often assessing their own or their classmates' work.

Leaders and managers have an extremely clear picture of the strengths of the school and what still needs to be done. This is based on very effective monitoring, involving governors and managers at all levels. Really challenging targets are set, not just for pupils' progress, but also for all areas of school development. Governors play a full role in this, challenging and supporting the school most effectively. The school is an extremely harmonious community, with all being valued and included. Pupils from minority ethnic groups were full of praise for the way that their cultures are celebrated. The promotion of the local community is strong, and pupils are developing a very keen awareness of UK, European and global issues. With the shared determination of headteacher, senior leaders, all staff and governors to continue to strive for the best, the school is exceptionally well placed to continue on the upward path. There is no complacency here!

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

'The EYFS is fantastic, even my two-year-old daughter wants to go there!' This comment, typical of many made by parents, is indicative of the high standards being set and met. This is because the manager understands clearly the needs and strengths of EYFS and has developed a strong sense of teamwork amongst all adults. Planning for children's learning and development is excellent and their developmental advances and next steps are carefully recorded. Because of this provision, children are achieving exceptionally well across all areas of learning, but particularly in their communication, language and literacy. For instance, children in Reception can already write simple sentences.

The whole environment is tailored to learning and there is an excellent mix of activities led by an adult and those children choose for themselves. When children choose their own activities, they are expected to report back on what they have been doing and have discovered. The outside area is used well for physical development but does not lend itself to developing all areas of learning.

Provision for children's welfare is excellent and is a key reason for their outstanding personal, social and emotional development. In an outstanding session for Nursery children, attended by many parents, children used drama and role play to act out solutions to problems. The setting is led and managed extremely well and resources and staff are deployed very effectively to ensure that individual needs are met. There is excellent communication with parents, whose information about their children's successes is highly valued.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in writing, so that the number achieving the higher Level 5 more closely matches the number reaching that level in reading and mathematics.

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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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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	1
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	1
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**

22 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bartholomew's CofE Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV4 5LG

Thank you so much for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We were really impressed with how much trouble you took, one of you even insisting that Mum had your hair done specially! We thoroughly enjoyed our day with you and were thrilled to hear how much you enjoy your school. We are not surprised, as you are extremely fortunate to be in such an outstanding school.

You are making excellent progress and reaching exceptionally high standards by the time you leave as you are being taught really well. We think that the way your teachers help you to improve your work in the targets they set for you and the helpful way they mark your work is excellent. Another reason for your successful learning is the wide variety of things you do in lessons, all the music in Year 4 and the language investigations in Year 6, for instance. We were delighted to hear you tell us about the wide range of extra things organised for you after school and also all the trips you go on. Three opportunities to go on a residential trip is most unusual and those of you in Year 1 are really lucky to have one just for you.

All adults look after you exceptionally well and you feel very safe and secure. You also play your part in helping the smooth running of the school and you are developing extremely well into sensible, responsible young people. Your headteacher and all the staff and governors are doing a splendid job running the school and will not ease up until you are at the best school in the world!

There is just one thing that we have asked you school to improve.

- Although really high numbers of you get Level 5s in your national tests in reading, maths and science, not so many of you do in writing. We have said that work needs to be done to ensure that all of you are doing as well in writing as in the other subjects.

You can help by continuing to work really hard and particularly by trying to reach all your writing targets. Especially, keep enjoying school and your work!

With best wishes

Yours faithfully

John D Eadie

Lead inspector