

Acocks Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134280
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	328877
Inspection dates	26–27 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Geoff Cresswell

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)	480
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	Phillip Coakes
Headteacher	Julia Dodson
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Westley Road Acocks Green Birmingham B27 7UQ
Telephone number	01217 062165
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Acocks Green is a large primary school with Nursery provision. The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, two thirds of whom are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible to claim free school meals is much higher than average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Acocks Green Primary School provides a satisfactory education. One of the most striking features, evident to both parents and pupils, is the good level of pastoral care which helps pupils feel safe and secure. They are confident about their place in the school and know that adults care for them. Pupils relate well to each other, readily help each other and work cooperatively. They consistently behave well because rules are maintained in a calm and supportive atmosphere. All members of the school community clearly enjoy being with one another, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. The headteacher and senior managers lead by example in creating this ethos. Staff follow suit and take an active interest in the pupils. One consequence of this dedication is the numerous activities outside lesson time that enrich the pupils' experiences. These activities often focus on physical activities resulting in all pupils having a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Pupils' enjoyment of school also stems from the rich and varied curriculum that they experience, ranging from creative afternoons in Year 1 to a whole-school 'book week'. Attendance is satisfactory, having moved closer to the national average over the last three years. Although the proportion of persistent absentees is decreasing, it is still too high.

Children get a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because provision is good. From having below expected skills and development on entry to the Nursery, children's attainment is broadly average by the end of Reception. Standards are also broadly average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. This represents satisfactory achievement overall, but there are some notable variations in the progress pupils make. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because the school supports them well in small teaching groups for English and mathematics. Teaching assistants and outside agencies are used effectively to give support that meets these pupils' needs. Progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is good and standards for pupils in Year 6 are above average in this subject. The subject is led and taught well, a key element being the effectiveness of the marking that develops into a sophisticated dialogue between pupil and teacher. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In information and communication technology (ICT), teachers use lessons in a wide variety of subjects to hone the skills that pupils are learning. ICT is led and managed well and all pupils make good progress. A relative weakness, recognised by the school, is pupils' slower progress in writing. This is also linked to teaching and marking. In this case, the day-to-day planning does not give enough time for pupils to consolidate the skills being taught before moving on to learning a new skill.

Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. The impact of actions taken to address issues is limited in some cases because there is not always a clear analysis of why a weakness exists. Subsequently, some actions are not sufficiently focused on the root cause of the problem. A prime example is action taken to improve writing. Positive initiatives, such as extended writing sessions, lose impact because the issue of consolidating skills is not addressed. Similarly, whilst a wealth of data are collected, they are not analysed with enough rigour. This restricts the very supportive governing body's ability to offer constructive criticism. The headteacher has generated a very good team ethos. The staff, many of whom are new to the school in the last three years, make an effective contribution to leadership and management. The school is on a sound footing to deliver necessary improvements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The number of children who enter the Nursery with no prior pre-school experience and the above average number of children for whom English is an additional language (EAL) mean that children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge below expected levels. Children achieve well across all areas of learning because of good teaching, particularly in the Nursery. There is a good balance between play and learning activities that children really enjoy, such as making pizzas supervised by two mums. Teaching assistants mostly work well supervising activities and making ongoing notes about how well children are doing, although there is some inconsistency in practice that limits the effectiveness of this process. In the Reception classes, children generally enjoy activities maintaining interest and involvement. This is most evident in direct teaching groups, but less so during free choice when some children only get involved for a very short time.

Behaviour and relationships are good. Children build positive friendships and are very tolerant. One child, deeply involved in outdoor building, reacted with a heartfelt 'Oh Man!' when a parked trike gently ran down a slope and demolished his construction. He calmly set about rebuilding. Children are happy and well looked after and nurtured. Parents feel secure about their children's welfare and enjoyment of school. The school is aware of the need to develop provision for the increasing number of children with home languages other than English and to reflect this in daily planning. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effectively overseen by the headteacher following a very recent staffing change.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress and standards in writing by ensuring that teaching gives sufficient opportunity for skills to be embedded.
- Improve attendance by focusing action on reducing the number of persistent absentees.
- Ensure that action for school improvement is based on rigorous analysis that identifies why any weakness exists.

A small proportion of 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

Following the good start made in the Early Years Foundation Stage, achievement from Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory so that pupils reach broadly average standards by the time they leave. Nevertheless, there are some variations in the rates of progress that pupils make across the school and standards reached in different subjects at the end of Year 6. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make slower progress in writing than in reading. This resulted in standards in English in Year 6 being lower than those for mathematics and science in 2008. Although the school recognises that further improvements are needed, progress in writing is now satisfactory due to recent improvements to teaching. Progress in reading in both key stages is satisfactory. Pupils' current work in books and in lessons shows that standards in mathematics are above average and similar to those assessed for Year 6 pupils in 2008. Progress in science in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, but good progress is made in the area of using and applying skills within the subject. Overall, standards in science at the end of Key Stage 2 are average, similar to the previous two years.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school. EAL pupils make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From an early age, pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes healthy eating and know that exercise is good for them. They behave well and feel safe and free from any harassment or bullying, being confident about approaching an adult for help should any difficulty occur. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are developing a social conscience. They know that there are children in the world who lack food, shelter and medicine and they support efforts to help such children, for example taking part in 'Red Nose Day'. Pupils also contribute well to the local community, enhancing the school's good reputation. The choir have sung during the switching on of the community Christmas lights and Year 2 pupils have sung to senior citizens in the local community library. Pupils' preparation for the next steps of their education is satisfactory. They have a good breadth of ICT and numeracy skills, using these skills confidently in a wide variety of activities. In contrast, their use of writing skills is underdeveloped. Pupils' social skills are good and they are able to collaborate effectively on tasks. Pupils enjoy coming to school and for most attendance is satisfactory. However, too many persistent absentees are failing to respond to the school's efforts to improve the overall profile.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Lessons are planned with a common format that includes clear learning objectives and allows for parts of the lesson to be adapted to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The format does not incorporate EAL pupils in the same way, but in the majority of cases, teaching assistants are deployed well and consequently enable all pupils to fully engage with the lesson. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils who respond by wanting to do what is required. Teachers plan some imaginative activities and use ICT resources particularly well, increasing the pupils' enjoyment of the lesson. There are good and outstanding lessons. However, there is a lack of consistency of good practice. Teaching in some lessons lacks pace because pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher without responding or taking part. Some lessons are not pitched at the right level of difficulty and marking is not consistent between classes and subjects. This limits pupils' achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is imaginative and stimulating. Learning experiences are planned regularly beyond the gates of the school, such as the visit of Year 1 to the Botanical Gardens during the inspection. The visit resulted in a rich experience for the pupils and enabled them to acquire a good understanding of what is needed to make plants grow. People from outside the school community bring enriching experiences into school, such as visits from authors, musicians, sports coaches and theatre companies. The curriculum is thoroughly planned giving a consistency of experience for pupils in parallel classes. It also meets the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities well. There are very good opportunities for pupils to develop ICT

and numeracy skills. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to use writing skills in subjects other than English. The school has also identified the need to give more opportunities for pupils to develop enterprise skills to prepare them for the world of work and the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school successfully involves a wide range of agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are being met. Staff know the pupils well and are quick to respond to their needs. Safeguarding requirements are met and appropriate health and safety procedures are in place. A learning mentor is effective in supporting vulnerable pupils, and pupils with behavioural difficulties are supported well so that they take a full part in lessons without disrupting others. The setting of personal targets is proving effective in mathematics, but in some cases targets set in English are ineffectual because pupils do not remember them. EAL pupils are also enabled to take a full part in lessons, although an assessment of the extent of their language development has only begun recently. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and effective strategies are quickly put in place to meet their needs. Consequently, they make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. Senior managers have ensured that the school has educational direction. Subject leaders in mathematics and ICT are providing a clear direction for improving standards in their respective subjects and pupils achieve well in both. The recently appointed subject leader for English at Key Stage 2 has introduced some effective initiatives that are improving pupils' progress in writing. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed efficiently. However, while there is extensive and well organised monitoring of teaching and learning, this is less effective when its purpose is unclear. The recently appointed coordinator for pupils for whom English is an additional language has begun to improve provision for these pupils by identifying which of them also has learning difficulties.

Many of the governors are new to their roles this year, and while they offer significant support to the work of the school, they lack experience to be able to challenge the school in depth. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The school considers its local context and its changing nature alongside other communities. Some good initiatives have been taken to improve provision but the impact of these has not been evaluated.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

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?	2
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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	2

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	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	3

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	2
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**

2 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Acocks Green Primary School, Birmingham B27 7UQ

My colleagues and I would like to thank you for making us feel very welcome on our recent visit to your school. Your school is giving you a satisfactory education and knows what it needs to do to improve.

We saw how much you enjoy the interesting things that you learn about and how enthusiastically you take part in the many after-school clubs. You behave well and enjoy being together. Your parents like this about the school. You say that you feel safe in school. You are good at helping one another. The adults in school know you well and take good care of you. You do a lot of exercise in school and know which food is good for you. You use the computers and laptops well and use them to help you in lots of different lessons. The teachers in the Nursery and Reception help you to learn quickly. The teachers' marking in mathematics helps you to improve. It is good that those of you who are older write to the teacher about what you have learnt; this helps you to make good progress in mathematics. Although you are beginning to write a lot more, the teachers sometimes move on to teach you something new in writing before you have chance to make sure that you have a skill mastered. A few of you miss a lot of school and because of this do not learn as much as you should. Those of you who find learning more difficult are doing well and the school is good at helping you. The staff work well together and this makes everyone feel good about the school.

In order to help the school to improve further, we have asked the staff to:

- Help you to get better at writing by giving you enough time to make sure you master each writing skill before moving on to another one.
- Find ways to get the few of you who are missing a lot of school to start coming regularly.
- Make sure that, when they find something in school that needs improving, they get a clearer understanding of the problem before taking action.

You can help your school to improve by attending regularly and continuing to work hard at improving your writing. We wish each one of you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours faithfully

Geoff Cresswell

Lead inspector