

Conway Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103202
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336032
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Watters HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger King
Headteacher	Ms Pat Smart
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2007
School address	Conway Road Sparkbrook Birmingham
Telephone number	0121 6750622
Fax number	0121 675 1233
Email address	pat.smart@conway.bham.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 32 lessons and saw 31 teachers. Inspectors also observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, school improvement plan and assessment information. Inspectors also looked at pupils' books and the responses to questionnaires sent to parents and carers, pupils and staff. They also met with groups of parents and pupils. Inspectors received 107 parents' questionnaires, which represents 51% of the total families with children at the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and achievement of all groups of pupils
- the quality of teaching, including the use of assessment to support learning
- provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- pupils' attendance.

Information about the school

When the school was inspected in November 2007 it was judged to require special measures because of low standards, slow rates of progress and weaknesses in teaching, learning, leadership and management. The school's progress was monitored regularly, and at the last monitoring inspection in December 2009 the school was judged to be making satisfactory progress in tackling these weaknesses.

The school is federated with a nearby successful primary school which was judged outstanding on its last inspection. The federation headteacher is the headteacher of both schools and she was appointed as a National Leader of Education in 2009. There is a joint governing body which oversees improvements in each school. The federation arrangements have been in place for just under one year. Nearly all pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Most are of Pakistani heritage, with others coming from Bangladeshi, Somali, Black African and Arab heritage. Almost 40% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of the pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The federation arrangements and inspirational leadership of the headteacher have dramatically turned around the school's fortunes in a relatively short period of time. Aspirations for the school's continued improvement are high and no stone is left unturned in the pursuit of higher standards for all pupils. While attainment in English and mathematics is still low and generally below the level expected for the pupils' ages, particularly in literacy in Year 2 and in writing in all year groups, standards are rising fast and rates of progress are increasing rapidly. A large majority of pupils are making good progress. These are the main reasons that pupils' achievement is satisfactory.

There is a good capacity for further improvement because the school knows its strengths and weaknesses extremely well. Self-evaluation is candid, accurate and effective. Senior leaders and governors know that there is still much to do in order to sustain recent improvements and embed further their ambitions for Conway's future success and development. Value for money is satisfactory because the school is currently managing and deploying its resources well, given the tight financial restraints it faces with its historical budget deficit. The strong and effective leadership shown by senior leaders is not reflected in the role of middle managers. This is because many are new to the role and have not developed a secure understanding of how they can best influence and impact on whole-school improvement, leadership and strategic decisions.

Pupils' behaviour is good and a significant strength. The pupils are courteous, polite, eager to learn and increasingly proud of their school. One pupil wrote: 'I want to stay in this school for the rest of my life.' This reflects the positive feedback from pupils' questionnaires, where many pupils said how much they appreciate what the school is now doing to help them improve. While the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with a majority of lessons that were good and outstanding, some weaknesses remain and there is not enough consistently good and better teaching in all year groups. The school takes good care of the pupils and provides good quality guidance and support to all groups. This is why the school is successful in promoting equal opportunity and tackling discrimination. The relentless focus on improving all pupils' life chances, through better academic attainment and personal development, cuts across any potential barriers of race, ethnicity and gender. This is one of the school's strongest achievements in the last year. While the curriculum is satisfactory, the school recognises that it needs developing further to enrich and broaden the pupils' experiences, creativity and cultural development. Morale and team spirit are good. This is a remarkable achievement given the school's recent turbulent past. The overwhelming majority of staff expressed

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confidence in the school's leadership, and particularly that of the headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in English and mathematics, particularly in literacy in Year 2 and writing in all year groups by:
 - improving the use of day-to-day assessment to support learning further, particularly where the teaching is only just satisfactory.
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by extending the effective modelling and coaching programme already in place.
- Strengthen the role of middle leaders and managers by:
 - delegating responsibility for aspects of whole-school improvement and then holding middle leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work
 - improving their understanding of whole-school strategic planning.
- Improve the curriculum further by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to take part in more imaginative and creative learning contexts
 - establishing better links between subjects to ensure that key skills in literacy and numeracy are applied more effectively in other subjects
 - providing further opportunities to broaden pupils' cultural development, particularly through arts and sports.
- As a matter of urgency, reduce the school's budget deficit by agreeing and implementing a budget deficit recovery plan in partnership with the local authority.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

There is a sustained and upward trend in standards of attainment. The gap between what the pupils are currently attaining and the level they are expected to reach for their age is narrowing rapidly. While the rise in standards is yet to impact on national test results, it is clearly evident in the school's own assessment information and in classrooms. For example, pupils in an average ability mathematics group in Year 6 made excellent progress when calculating answers to the teachers' challenging questions about the passage of time. Similarly, pupils in a Year 6 English lesson greatly enjoyed working in groups to record their opinions about the value and use of mobile telephones. Higher ability pupils in a Year 4 English lesson showed how much progress they have made when they used accurate grammar and imaginative vocabulary to describe the setting for a story. These examples of good learning and progress were reflected in just under half the lessons observed, with outstanding learning shown in a small minority of other lessons. In all the lessons observed the pupils made at least

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satisfactory progress. However in a few lessons where teachers' planning did not take enough account of pupils' different starting points, their progress was slower. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the highly effective and good intervention strategies to support their learning. There is no significant difference between the attainment and progress of groups of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds because the school successfully ensures that achieving higher standards is the equal right of all pupils.

The pupils enjoy coming to school and, when lessons are challenging and interesting, are highly motivated. They feel safe and secure and have confidence in the adults who work with them each day. The pupils know that exercise and a balanced diet are important to maintain a healthy lifestyle, although they have less knowledge about drug misuse and mental health. Relationships are positive and pupils appreciate the respect they are given, which they in turn show to adults. The mentoring role for older pupils enables them to make a valuable contribution to the school community, although many pupils are less sure about what they can do to support and improve the wider community in which they live. Attendance is generally in line with the national average for primary schools. Faith assemblies enable pupils to demonstrate the importance of their culture and religion, and these opportunities are respected and appreciated.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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How effective is the provision?

The positive impact of the school's coaching and training programme has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching. The school's best teachers are used effectively to eliminate weaknesses in teaching, although there is still a very small minority of lessons where teaching remains fragile and teachers' day-to-day assessment is not used well enough to support pupils' learning. Nevertheless, the large majority of pupils are now benefiting from better quality teaching. For example, pupils in a higher ability mathematics group in Year 4 really enjoyed learning about capacity when measuring quantities of liquids to make a 'magic potion'. The teacher's role play undoubtedly helped! Assessment is used effectively in many lessons. The pupils' work is generally matched well to their different ability levels and this is why they are making faster progress and reaching higher standards. The curriculum is stronger in numeracy and literacy than in other subjects because the school has needed to establish a strong and consistent focus on raising standards in these areas. It is now well placed to develop a richer and more imaginative curriculum, with more opportunities for pupils to use their improving skills in English and mathematics in all subjects, and to extend their cultural development through arts and the sports, without losing the focus on better standards and achievement for all pupils. Vulnerable pupils are supported extremely well through careful and sensitive intervention, which has led to some remarkable success stories. Pupils and parents are extremely appreciative of the good quality of advice and guidance which the school provides.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is no doubt that the federation arrangements and exemplary leadership of the headteacher have made the most telling contribution to halting the school's decline. Effective actions have eliminated the school's previous weaknesses and led to a marked improvement in all key areas of its performance. The headteacher has successfully refocused the school towards its core purpose that all pupils should achieve well and enjoy their school life. Systems for tracking pupils' progress, monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and robust and are making a significant difference to pupils' life chances.

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The single governing body for the federation has high expectations and aspirations for both schools and is well led by the chair and vice chair of governors. Along with governors, the headteacher and senior leaders, who provide excellent support, are driving improvement effectively, but have not embedded their ambition in all middle leaders and managers, whose understanding of whole-school strategic planning is not secure. Similarly, many middle leaders and managers are still learning their roles and, up to now, have not been ready to take on significant delegated responsibility. This, and the lack of a recovery plan for the budget deficit, are two of the main reasons why the school's collective leadership and management are satisfactory rather than better.

One of the main contributions to the success in raising standards is the relentless focus on promoting equality for all pupils and tackling any potential discrimination. There is a strong belief that all pupils have the right to succeed, which is shown in the profile of higher achievement for all groups of pupils and their positive attitudes to learning. Relationships with parents and carers are effective. The governing body diligently ensures that government requirements for safeguarding pupils are met well and that the school is a safe and secure environment. There has been strong and effective action to promote whole-school community cohesion by successfully addressing the rich cultural and religious diversity which pupils bring to school. Senior leaders recognise that they now need to extend pupils' understanding of how their faiths and cultures compare with the local, national and global community and also how they might actively promote cohesion among the many communities that live locally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

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The Early Years Foundation Stage Nursery and Reception classes have benefited positively from recent improvements in the learning environment and from training and support to ensure a better quality of education for the youngest children. When they enter the Nursery, children's attainment levels are very low, and exceptionally low in communication and language. While children's progress in the past has not been fast enough, rates of progress are now increasing. Teachers' assessments show that, by the end of the summer 2010, many pupils are expected to make good progress and move closer to the levels expected for their age. Provision and outcomes are stronger in the Reception classes than in the Nursery. The good quality of the indoor and outdoor learning environments is having a significant impact on children's learning, enjoyment and development. Most adults intervene effectively to extend children's learning experiences although this is not as well embedded in the Nursery as it is in the Reception classes. Assessment information is used satisfactorily to support children's day-to-day learning but is not used well enough to identify priorities for improvement across all areas of children's learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and have confidence in the headteacher's leadership. Parents told inspectors that they are very pleased with the improvements made through the federation. They said that the school is very welcoming, the headteacher and senior leaders are very approachable and easy to talk with and that they appreciate the workshops run by the school to help them support their children's learning. A few parents said that their suggestions for the school are not always followed up and this is supported by a very small minority of parents and carers who responded in the parents' questionnaires. The school is considering how it can best respond to this view and is planning to add this focus to its regular survey of parents' views in the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Conway Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 470 pupils registered at the school, representing 210 families.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	52	45	42	4	4	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	53	50	52	48	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	37	61	57	4	4	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	39	52	49	9	8	4	4
The teaching is good at this school	38	36	59	55	8	7	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	35	58	54	10	9	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	38	58	54	4	4	4	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	30	52	49	11	10	6	6
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	27	64	60	10	9	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	35	57	53	9	8	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	23	60	56	11	10	9	8
The school is led and managed effectively	32	30	57	53	11	10	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	40	51	48	6	6	5	6

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Conway Primary School, Birmingham, B11 1NS

I am extremely pleased to tell you that your school has done well in this inspection and no longer needs inspectors to visit each term. Ms Smart, teachers, governors and other adults who work with you each day are making sure that you get more enjoyment from coming to school than you did in the past. We were really impressed with your good behaviour. Many of you told us that you are really pleased with the changes in your school and that you can see how much your work is improving. This has made you more confident and raised your hopes for what you might do in the future. Here are some of the things that your school is doing well

- making sure you are safe and well looked after and listening to your concerns
- helping all of you do much better in your work, particularly in your numeracy and literacy lessons
- giving you more challenging and interesting lessons
- planning to make sure your school gets even better than it is now.

Although your school is doing well, these are the things that we have asked Ms Smart and the governors to make sure get even better:

- the standard of your work in English and mathematics, particularly in writing
- the quality of teaching, so that all your lessons are well planned and give you work that helps you build on what you can already do well, making sure every lesson is interesting, imaginative and fun
- opportunities to use your skills in writing, reading and numeracy in other subjects
- the way some of the teachers who help manage the school can be more helpful to Ms Smart and the governors
- planning how to spend and save money, to make sure you have all the things you need to help you in your work.

Thank you for making us so welcome. I will certainly miss my regular visits and I wish you every success for the rest of your time in school and for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters

Her Majesty's Inspector

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