

Allens Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103243
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336037
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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

The registered childcare provision, 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 of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean McEwan
Headteacher	Johanne Clifton
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2007
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Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They also took account of views expressed through pupil and staff surveys. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, teachers' planning and assessments, information on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, safeguarding documentation and 35 parent questionnaires.

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

- the use of assessment information in Key Stage 1 to ensure progress is good enough
- the effectiveness of actions taken to raise standards in writing and mathematics
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of boys, especially in writing
- the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure good language and literacy development
- the adequacy of safeguarding arrangements.

Information about the school

In this slightly smaller than average multicultural primary school there are sixteen different ethnic groups represented. The majority of pupils are either of White British or Pakistani backgrounds. Although about a quarter of pupils are learning English as an additional language, very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is provided in a Reception class. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools, Activemark and Basic Skills Quality Mark status. On site there is a children's centre which is not managed by the governing body, and a separate report will be available for this provision.

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

3

Main findings

Allens Croft Primary School is a welcoming and attractive environment where pupils enjoy coming to school. All staff work together as a team to ensure pupils are provided with good care, guidance and support, which is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their good behaviour. Parents and carers think highly of the school and appreciate its work with their children. A typical view is, 'Every child really matters here and always has!' Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the school's work and explains the good relationships, and why the school is a cohesive community. Rigorous safeguarding arrangements result in pupils who feel safe, and who have a good understanding of how to keep safe.

Attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average, which is testimony to the impact of the efforts invested by the leadership to improve attainment since the previous inspection. In the past, boys have not attained as highly as girls, but with the introduction of a more creative curriculum, boys' attainment is starting to improve. Achievement is satisfactory, as are learning and progress. However, those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are at the early stages of learning English make good progress, because they benefit from support that is carefully tailored to their needs.

Most lessons observed were at least satisfactory, and good teaching was evident in Years 4 to 6. In these year groups, progress is good, notably in reading and mathematics. However, this is not consistent throughout the school, and attainment in writing is not high enough in most year groups. Teachers' subject knowledge of the teaching of writing is insecure, and the work in pupils' books shows insufficient evidence of how writing skills are developed. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to record their ideas. In Years 1 to 3, teachers do not use assessment information effectively enough to ensure activities are suitable for pupils of all abilities and this limits their progress. Expectations of the quality and quantity of work are not high enough in these year groups. Furthermore, whilst there are good examples of written feedback, these are not consistent, leaving pupils with insufficient guidance about how to improve. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, although progress is satisfactory, assessment information is not used well enough to adapt the curriculum to meet the range of children's needs. Developing children's skills in knowing the names and sounds of letters is a priority for improvement.

The senior leadership has an accurate view of strengths and areas that could be made better. However, the actions implemented to rectify weaknesses are not always sharp enough to raise attainment and progress throughout the school. Monitoring and evaluation activities do not ensure all staff consistently implement agreed actions and

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leaders do not check regularly enough the impact of their work. Consequently, weaknesses are not rectified quickly ensuring rapid improvements. Governors do not challenge the leadership sufficiently well about attainment and pupils' progress. However, the success of actions to raise standards by the end of Year 6, especially in mathematics, and the good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at the early stage of learning English, show the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing throughout the school by:
 - planning activities that ensure day-by-day progression in learning
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge in the teaching of writing
 - pupils having daily opportunities to practise their writing skills.
- Accelerate pupils' progress from Reception to the end of Year 3 by:
 - using assessment information more precisely to ensure activities meet the range of pupils' needs, including those of children in Reception
 - increasing the proportion of Reception age children attaining expected levels in knowing the names and sounds of letters
 - raising teachers' expectations in terms of the amount of work completed by pupils in Years 1 to 3 and of their presentation
 - ensuring marking indicates clearly to pupils in Years 1 to 3, why work is good and the next steps of learning.
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation procedures by:
 - leaders checking on a weekly basis that agreed actions which focus on raising attainment are acted upon by all staff
 - governors becoming more involved in challenging the leadership about pupils' learning and progress.
- About 40% of the school's 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**

The quality of learning seen in lessons confirmed that, relative to their starting points, pupils make satisfactory progress. Good progress was seen in Years 4 to 6. This is a result of effective teaching, where teachers use assessment information to carefully match tasks to pupils' needs and engage their interests. As a result, pupils work hard and make good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding, and attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average. In Years 1 to 3, teachers do not always expect enough of pupils, and more able pupils, especially in mathematics, are sometimes given

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tasks which they complete too easily. However, this is improving particularly in Year 2, as a group of more able pupils are now receiving specifically targeted work. There are improvements too in reading, and attainment is starting to rise. In writing, however, in most year groups, attainment is not high enough. Despite improvements there is still some way to go before progress is consistently good throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of well planned programmes of work which specifically meet their learning needs. Those at the early stages of learning English also make good progress because of good support. Overall achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils have good attitudes towards learning and their behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and are confident adults will provide the help and support they need. One pupil commented, 'There is very little bullying here, and any unkindness is sorted out by our headteacher very quickly and fairly.' Pupils are keen to take responsibility as prefects, school councillors or eco-committee members. They develop a good understanding of how to contribute positively to the community by, for example, helping to remove any graffiti. A good awareness of the needs of others is developed through raising funds for charities at home and abroad. Pupils know the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle, and many take part in the wide variety of sporting opportunities offered to them. Pupils' good personal skills, along with their satisfactory progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills, prepare them soundly for their future.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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 to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3 3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good relationships were observed in all lessons, promoting good behaviour and cooperation. In lessons for Years 4 to 6 pupils, there are good expectations of what pupils might achieve, practical and engaging activities, regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their progress and probing questioning from staff. This was seen in a good lesson for Year 5 pupils, when pupils used research about Florence Nightingale to present information in a variety of interesting ways. These included use of drama, information and communication technology and newspaper reports. These best teaching practices, however, are not consistently embedded in all classes. In the weaker lessons, tasks do not always match pupils' different needs and abilities, particularly in writing, so progress is only satisfactory. Assessment systems provide accurate information but the use of information to plan next steps in learning is patchy, as is the quality of marking. Also, at times, teachers are not exactly clear what it is they expect pupils to learn and expectations are not high enough.

The curriculum is adapted well to enable those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make good progress. However, the curriculum does not provide enough opportunity for pupils to develop their writing skills nor ensure the good progress of pupils in Years 1 to 3. Learning is enhanced through themes, visitors and use of local facilities. This focus on first-hand experiences has ensured that boys who have been at risk of underachieving are now more involved in their learning. Pupils speak highly of the visits and the wide variety of after-school clubs.

Parents and carers appreciate the good quality care, guidance and support their children receive. Pupils agree they feel safe and well supported. The support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with emotional difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English are good. Early diagnosis and appropriate actions are taken to enable these pupils to play a full part and to enjoy school. Good involvement of external agencies benefits pupils and their families. The school works hard to ensure regular, punctual attendance and, consequently attendance is rising. The before and after school clubs ensure pupils are looked after in a safe and well-managed environment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3 3
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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	
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?

The headteacher offers clear leadership which is determined to raise pupils' attainment and achievement. She has been successful in ensuring all staff are united in their commitment to help the school to improve. Senior leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development, but they have too rosy a view of some aspects of the school's performance and their success in influencing improvement has been variable. Although successful in raising attainment at the end of Year 6, weaknesses in other year groups remain. This is because the monitoring of teaching and book scrutinies have not focused sharply enough on the progress made by different groups of learners, especially in Years 1 to 3. Although actions are identified and agreed by staff, their implementation is not checked upon rigorously enough by those with leadership responsibilities. Governors are supportive and ensure safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection, are robust. Their role of challenge is developing.

The school works well to promote community cohesion, particularly in ensuring that pupils from numerous ethnic minorities together form a happy and harmonious community. Partnerships are promoted well and links to the local community, welfare and educational facilities have made a significant contribution to the well-being of pupils. Links with parents are also good, with many coming into school to attend a variety of different events and the workshops offered to them. The school is inclusive, seeking always to treat all pupils fairly and equitably. However, the progress of all pupils is not even throughout the school.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start school, their skills and knowledge are mainly well below those expected for their age. Their literacy skills are particularly weak. As a consequence of the supportive work of staff during the initial few weeks, children settle quickly, become confident in their surroundings and demonstrate interest and enjoyment of the activities provided. Relationships with adults are good and, during the inspection, it was evident that children related well to each other.

Although staff work hard to provide interesting activities, assessments are not regular enough in each area of learning to ensure planning is adjusted to fully meet the needs of all children. At times, children are expected to sit listening to adults for far too long, and then children become restless and lose concentration. Even so, progress is satisfactory, although only a minority of children attain the levels expected in all six areas of learning by the end of their Reception Year. Progress in personal, social and emotional development, however, is good, as was seen when children worked independently sharing ideas and resources in the outdoor environment. Leaders' analysis of assessment information has correctly identified that children do not do well enough in knowing the names of letters and their sounds and they have set this as a priority for improvement.

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

Parents are supportive, and all of those who responded to the questionnaire agree the school keeps their child safe, the leadership and management are good, and their child enjoys school. Almost all parents agreed with all other questions in the questionnaire. There are no areas of the school's work with which parents have concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Allens Croft 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 35 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 208 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	71	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	74	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	74	8	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	66	11	31	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	65	11	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	71	9	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	73	12	34	0	0	0	0
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)	20	57	10	29	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	60	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	60	12	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	63	11	31	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	80	7	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	77	7	20	0	0	0	0

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.



3 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Allens Croft Primary School, Birmingham, B14 6RP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We were very impressed by how friendly and helpful you are.

Here are some of the important things we found out:

- you feel safe in school and adults will always help if you are worried
- your behaviour is good and, during our lesson observations, we saw how you all willingly help each other, and eagerly share ideas
- you know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and enjoy taking part in the many sporting activities that are available
- your teachers are trying hard to make the curriculum more interesting so you are getting lots of opportunities to visit different places. I wish I could have come with you to the German market; it sounded really good fun!
- those of you who sometimes find learning difficult make good progress, as do those of you who are new to learning English
- by the time you leave in Year 6 you attain standards that are similar to those which are found in most schools.

We think you make satisfactory progress, but at the moment you make better progress in some classes than in others and you could attain higher standards in writing. Your headteacher agrees and so we have asked for the following things to happen:

- teachers help you to become much better with your writing skills
- make sure that those of you in Reception to Year 3 make the same good progress as pupils in other year groups
- your headteacher, other leaders and governors check often that you are all making the progress you should.

Thank you again for answering our questions and helping with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Lois Furness

Lead inspector

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