

Topcliffe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103307
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	336053
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Sue Beer
Headteacher	Mr Ian Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at policies and documentation on teaching and learning, the curriculum, procedures for assessing and tracking children's progress, the school improvement plan and information about the Early Years Foundation Stage. They analysed a total of 35 parents' questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of action taken to improve achievement in writing, particularly among boys
- how well pupils respond to expectations of good behaviour
- how effectively provision supports learning outcomes for vulnerable pupils
- how well leaders and managers at all levels promote school improvement.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school situated in the north-east part of the city. The majority of pupils are White British, and very few use English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average, as are the numbers with statements. These arise mainly from specific learning or language and communication difficulties. Two speech and language resource bases located within the school help to cater for their needs. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Financial Management Standards in Schools awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Topcliffe Primary is a good school that has made good progress since the last inspection. The headteacher, ably supported by senior colleagues, has brought about significant improvements across the school. The rate of progress made by pupils has quickened with staff and governors united in a renewed desire to improve further learning for pupils. The school's capacity to improve is good; with accurate self-evaluation showing what impact actions are having and highlighting areas for future development. Parents, pupils and staff are all highly supportive of the school's work. One parent typically commented that: 'My child has come on really well this last year with his learning and behaviour. I am really pleased that this school is going from strength to strength.'

The majority of children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, understanding and skills well below those typical for their age, especially in language and personal development. Progress here is good as a result of the good teaching, a lively curriculum and the effective care and support provided. Pupils with widely different needs and abilities within the main school also make good progress. Two resource bases cater effectively for nineteen pupils from across the city with significant speech and language difficulties. These pupils are integrated into the school whenever it is to their advantage, and they are fully included in the life of the school. The school is a cohesive and harmonious community.

Senior leaders have introduced new systems for measuring and monitoring progress, that are enabling the school to respond more quickly to pupils' identified needs. An extensive programme of additional support operates throughout the year and ensures that the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Despite standards in writing, particularly of boys, remaining low, assessments indicate that the majority of pupils are on track to meet the challenging targets the school has set. Given pupils' attainment on entry, this constitutes good progress.

Pupils are clear that they feel safe within the school, as a result of the good care, guidance and support they receive. They show their enjoyment of school through their excellent behaviour and improving attendance. School leaders recognise the need for further action to reach good levels of attendance. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.

All safeguarding requirements are met and regularly reviewed. Teaching is good overall, with some that is satisfactory. Good teaching engages pupils and well planned and stimulating activities keep them interested. In satisfactory lessons, progress slows as not all groups of pupils are appropriately challenged. Recent improvements in marking

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ensure that pupils are provided with increasing guidance as to how to improve, although some inconsistencies remain. The good curriculum is adapted well to reflect the needs of different groups.

Leadership and management are good, with new roles already well established and all the staff clearly focused upon driving the school forward. Although governors are committed to the school and ambitious for its success, they are not fully involved in monitoring and evaluating its progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment throughout the school by:
 - consistent use of assessment information to plan lessons to match work to the varying needs of learners
 - consistently providing pupils with clear and helpful feedback.
- Improve the effectiveness of governors by:
 - - ensuring their greater involvement in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work.
- Support the present increase in attendance to bring it securely in line with the national average over the next two years by:
 - –

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils, overall, attain broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 6. Pupils' with special educational needs and/or disabilities understandably struggle to reach average standards. The progress of all groups of pupils is good. Attainment on entry to the school is low, with significant weaknesses in language and personal development. The school responds to this well with good evaluation identifying each pupil's needs. Resources are used well to support learning, and the school environment is attractive with much to stimulate progress. Pupils benefit from closely targeted interventions in learning, informed by the effective tracking system introduced last year. Despite their often very low starting points, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and are well supported. They make a significant contribution to the success of the school. All pupils effectively acquire new knowledge, gain understanding and learn new skills well. There are very positive relationships in lessons and around the school, and behaviour is outstanding. Progress in writing is rapidly improving because teaching has successfully focused on providing a range of activities carefully planned to provide stimulation and interest, especially among boys.

The school introduced an extensive tracking system last year, which is helping to promote good progress, but the use of the information provided is not used consistently to inform planning. A strength of the school is its specific monitoring of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the support it gives them.

Pupils clearly enjoy learning. The school is a friendly, welcoming and calm place with

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high expectations of its pupils. It places a high priority upon their safety and emotional well-being, and pupils and parents are particularly confident about this aspect of the school's work. Pupils are very positive about their experiences, as shown by the significant improvement in attendance over the last year. They have a good understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, reflecting the school's award, and they take advantage of the good sporting activities provided. The school council is effective and, although sometimes rather adult-directed, pupils are taking increasing responsibility for aspects of school life. Pupils' involvement in the local community is good. They are regularly involved in a range of community activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Learning is supported by the good relationships between pupils and the wide range of adults working at the school. In most lessons, good pace and challenging activities meet the needs of pupils well, ensuring that good progress is made. Teachers have good subject knowledge and different teaching methods are often successful in making learning interesting and meaningful. Information and communication technology is used

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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to bring learning alive. Challenging targets are set for each year group and assessment data are well used by teachers to shape their teaching and to direct the support of teaching assistants. Pupils often assess their own progress, although the quality and impact of this varies across the school. Some lessons lack challenge for all groups of learners and activities do not fully meet the needs of all pupils. Progress slows in these lessons and is no better than satisfactory as a result.

The good curriculum is planned carefully and is responsive to most pupils' needs. Pupils receive a well-balanced range of experiences, which enables them to make good progress and enjoy their learning. The school promotes progress in music and all pupils in years 4 and 5 learn to play a brass instrument. Spanish is taught at Key Stage 2, and pupils particularly enjoy the regular opportunities to participate in the 'wake and shake' and sporting activities provided. Links between subjects are developing and increasing thought is given to equal opportunities for all learners.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school works well with a wide range of agencies to support pupils, especially the most vulnerable, in their learning. High quality individual education plans reflect how clear and appropriate strategies are put in place and regularly reviewed. The success of this is seen in the progress that these pupils make by the time they leave the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision for the school and has successfully gained the commitment of his colleagues. Through a clear sense of purpose and challenge, he has driven improvement forward over the last year. This ambition has been communicated very well to staff, parents and pupils and they are all highly supportive of his leadership. The school has developed high-quality plans for the future, which are clearly focused upon appropriate areas. Attainment and attendance rightly remain high priorities for improvement. Leaders and managers have become increasingly effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning, although some middle leaders have had a limited impact on school improvement in the recent past. Safeguarding requirements are met and the school provides a secure environment for learning. Governors provide appropriate support, but some are new, and systems of monitoring and evaluating the school's work are not secure. The school's contribution to community cohesion is effective, and there are good plans to further promote

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partnerships with other schools nationally and internationally.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle happily in the safe environment. The majority enter the school with knowledge, understanding and skills that are well below those typical for their age, especially in personal development and language acquisition. Throughout their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress in their learning, helped by the good care and support they receive. Progress in emotional development is particularly good. Children receive good support in an environment which caters well for their needs. Teachers communicate regularly with parents and carers and are well aware of children's interests. There are satisfactory links with the local Nursery, although increased liaison would aid transition and support progress. Children benefit from a good range of well-planned activities that significantly contribute to their enjoyment of school. Behaviour is outstanding, with clear expectations and routines established. Children play and work together very well as a result. Teachers regularly assess learning on a day-to-day basis and use this information well to plan children's next steps. Leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage are good.

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

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Although a relatively small number of parents and carers returned the questionnaires the overwhelming majority were very supportive of every aspect of the school's work. They are especially appreciative of the changes brought about under its new leadership and the high-quality care and support given to their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Topcliffe 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 192 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	40	19	54	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	43	20	57	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	34	19	54	3	9	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	51	14	40	2	6	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	17	49	16	46	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	43	18	51	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	46	15	43	3	9	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)	11	31	19	54	4	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	40	19	54	1	3	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	37	19	51	1	3	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	26	21	60	1	3	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	18	51	13	37	2	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	47	16	47	2	6	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.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Topcliffe Primary School, Castle Vale, Birmingham B35 6BS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school recently. You were very friendly and enthusiastic about it. Your behaviour is excellent - well done! You told us a lot of interesting things about your school and you are clearly very proud of it. We especially enjoyed the brass concert and the 'Sponge Bob Square Pants' assembly presented by those of you who work in the resource base.

We think that Topcliffe is a good school. You make a good start to your learning in the Reception class and make good progress as a result of the good teaching and care you receive. This continues into the main school where teaching, the subjects that you cover in lessons and the help that you get from the many adults, mean that you leave at the end of Year 6 having made good progress in your learning. You know what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and both you and your parents/carers say you feel safe and well cared for. I have asked the school to do three things to help bring further success:

Make good use of assessment information to make lessons always challenging, and give you good feedback so that you know what to do next to improve your work.

Make sure that governors have a very clear idea of how well the school is doing.

Keep supporting you and your families to make sure that your attendance continues to improve.

You can help by working hard, enjoying school and doing your best at all times. I wish you the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones

Lead inspector

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