

# Aston Tower Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103370
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	336068
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Edwards

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	470
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alison Graham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Moore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Aston Tower Community Primary Aston Birmingham
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents, representatives of the local authority and other friends of the school. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, school policies and other documentation, pupil and staff questionnaires. In addition 41 questionnaires were returned by parents and these were also scrutinised.

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

the impact of school initiatives to raise standards in writing and to provide challenge for all pupils, particularly higher attainers

- what the school is doing to raise attainment and progress for Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2 and special educational needs pupils at both key stages.
- how effectively the school tracks pupil attainment to set clear targets for their learning to impact on pupil progress and achievement at all levels and particularly for potentially higher attaining pupils.
- how successfully the leadership and management is using self evaluation to impact upon outcomes for all groups of pupils, so that improvement is sustainable.

## Information about the school

This is a larger than average inner city school. The majority of pupils are from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds and a very large majority of them use English as an additional language. A minority of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils eligible to receive a free school meal is significantly higher than the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a 65 place Nursery and two full-time Reception classes. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the start of Nursery or the end of Year 6 is much higher than normally found. The school has gained the sports Active Mark and Healthy Schools accreditation.

**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

Aston Tower is a satisfactory and improving school. It provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and cares for them well. Staff and governors share the headteacher's values and ambitions for the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is reflected in their improving attendance rates. Newcomers are welcomed from a wide range of backgrounds and very soon feel that they are valuable members of the community. As one Nursery parent said, 'I cannot fault anything at all with the help my son is getting at Aston Tower. I am very happy with his progress and we have a lot to talk about when he comes home from school'. The high proportion of pupils from families who do not speak English at home and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively supported so that they achieve satisfactorily. Pupils behave sensibly, know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and are good ambassadors for their school.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning and now leave with standards that are broadly in line with the national average. Standards have been low in the past but inspectors felt that currently standards are average and rising. Inspection evidence from lessons seen also indicates that attainment is now average and progress satisfactory. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but there are some good features. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Year 2 and also for the older Key Stage 2 pupils is often good and demonstrates the progress that pupils can make when teaching is well planned and challenging, and activities are well matched to pupils' needs. Progress remains inconsistent in other year groups and not enough of the teaching is of a high enough quality for all pupils to make the improvements in their learning that are needed to raise standards to a higher level. There are a good range of activities in lessons and visits to the locality and visitors to school enliven the curriculum. However, the curriculum does not always successfully build on the cultural heritage of its predominantly minority ethnic pupils.

The headteacher and his senior leadership team regularly monitor how the school is performing and have an accurate view of priorities for development. They keep governors well informed. Raising standards in mathematics has been tackled successfully and senior leaders are now starting to address the low standards in writing. Procedures are in place to address this issue but their impact has been slowed by recent changes to staff. The headteacher has ensured that all statutory regulations for safeguarding are in place. Any new appointments are vetted carefully. The school works well with parents and is constantly thinking of different and innovative ways to involve them in their children's learning. Since the last inspection the school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards throughout the school to raise attainment and accelerate pupil progress.
- Improve standards in writing by:
  - rigorously assessing pupils' strengths and weaknesses in writing to identify what particular things will help to accelerate pupil progress in this aspect of pupils' work
  - extending the opportunities for writing across subjects in the curriculum.
- Implement fully the school's planning for a culturally relevant curriculum in order to promote high-quality learning for all pupils by:
  - building an expectation of creativity into the school's teaching and learning policy and lesson planning procedures
  - helping pupils to make the connections between different areas of learning
  - ensuring that what is taught celebrates the cultural diversity of the pupils.
- Raise the quality of teaching across the school by:
  - ensuring that all teachers fully involve pupils in their learning
  - ensuring that all lessons have good pace and balance
  - using information from assessment more effectively when planning lessons in order to meet pupils' needs more accurately.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may have a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 in 2009 have improved over the previous year. The progress of pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 was strong and the best it has been for five years; it brought standards broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment at the higher levels in the statutory tests was the best for several years. The current standards in Year 6, observed in lessons and in pupils' work, are much improved and more pupils are on track to achieve national standards or exceed them this year.

Targets set for the current cohort are challenging and effective teaching in Year 6 is helping to make them achievable. Pupils with special educational need are well supported by skilled teaching assistants through a range of intervention strategies. This group and minority ethnic pupils are now achieving as well as other pupils in the school and their attainment is broadly in line with their counterparts nationally.

In Key Stage 1 standards dipped slightly in 2009, though apart from writing, they are still broadly in line with the national average. More pupils achieved the higher levels in the unvalidated 2009 assessments than ever before. Standards had been steadily rising

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in the previous four years and the current standards observed by inspectors in lessons at Year 2 and the quality of pupils' work indicate that the challenging targets set are realistic and achievable. Writing at both key stages is a key focus for improvement to raise standards and accelerate pupil progress.

Pupils from many different backgrounds and home countries get on well together in the classroom and out at play. Inspectors observed nothing but good behaviour. This produces a harmonious community. One pupil said, 'It is a lovely school and most of us care for each other'. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. They know how to lead healthy lifestyles. They enjoy participating in sport and exercise and relish the well-balanced school lunches. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they are worried or upset. There is very little bullying in the school and if any arises pupils are confident that it will be dealt with effectively. The peer mediators do a very effective job of supporting pupils if conflict arises. As one commented, 'We don't solve their problems. We teach them how to solve problems themselves'. The pupils who are school councillors or on the eco council are proud of their roles as they make a strong contribution to the school community and the school grounds. Through the school council and other pupil responsibilities pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school has rigorously pursued an improvement in attendance, through careful monitoring and the incentives of certificates and prizes. It is now broadly in line with national averages. Consequently, with the improving literacy and mathematics skills and satisfactory information and communication technology skills, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of education and, ultimately the world of work.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**How effective is the provision?**

The school has a team of teachers who demonstrate a positive attitude towards their work and towards the pupils in their care. Most teachers use questioning well to help pupils to think for themselves. Teaching assistants give good support to pupils with additional needs, to help them to keep up with the pace of work and to make satisfactory improvement. The work of the bilingual assistants helps pupils who have English as an additional language to acquire English so that they can effectively complete their work. Most teachers keep up a brisk pace in their teaching and have high expectations of pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and pupils themselves can explain how teachers help them to learn, especially through the use of marking that guides their improvement. Pupils are set challenging targets in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and upper Key Stage 2. These, and the challenging work given in some classes, are having a real impact on standards of attainment and progress. These measures help to engage and stimulate pupils in learning and to promote their good behaviour. However, teaching and learning is not always as effective in other classes across the school. The school has a satisfactory curriculum. Plans to develop it over the next year to promote creativity and to create stronger links between subjects, so that it has greater relevance for pupils and leads to accelerated learning, are in place. Currently there are missed opportunities to develop the curriculum further so that it incorporates music, art and literacy from the mainly minority ethnic pupil's own cultural heritage. The computers in the information and communication technology suite are used well to develop skills and to help pupils to use the subject in other areas of the curriculum. The good care, guidance and support that all pupils receive effectively promotes their personal development and well-being. Vulnerable pupils receive special help through the caring and sensitive support of teachers and teaching assistants and effective links with outside agencies.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

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## How effective are leadership and management?

The school makes sure that pupils are safe in its care, with robust checking of staff and careful scrutinies of the site. Staff know the correct procedures. The school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, enabling pupils from all ethnic backgrounds to make satisfactory progress.

The secure leadership team has been strengthened further by the appointment of an additional deputy head teacher. They have jointly established a clear vision of good practice in all aspects of provision and outcomes and have secured the confidence and trust of the staff in the drive to improve standards of attainment and progress for all pupils. Regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses, which have been shared by staff. This has resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, but there is a clear recognition by senior staff that more needs to be done to ensure a consistency of practice across the school. The strong emphasis on better quality teaching and learning has created a clear focus on improving attainment through raising teachers' expectations for all pupils. This is leading to a raising of standards and accelerating progress in some year groups, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and upper Key Stage 2, but the quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistent across all classes. A clear programme of staff development is being implemented to secure the necessary improvements in teaching and learning but needs more time to show even greater impact upon standards achieved in national tests.

The school knows itself very well and self evaluation is accurate and pinpoints clear priorities, leading to effective action for improvement. Leaders and managers have created a cohesive school with a strong sense of its place in the local and wider community. It has plans to further promote cohesion beyond its immediate locality, through links with schools in Britain and internationally.

The school has developed effective ways of engaging with parents and carers, both before children enter school and during the time that they are educated here. The Saathi House project is engaging parents in a partnership with the school to help them effectively support their children's learning. The pre-school induction procedures provide good preparation for children before they enter the Nursery or Reception class. The partnership with outside agencies helps to enhance pupils' learning opportunities. The Aston Pride information and communication technology project is an example of this. Governors are fully involved in the school. They are becoming well informed about the working of the school. They are supportive but are not afraid to challenge the school when needed. However, they need to ensure that policies that need reviewing and updating are always completed on time.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with social and language skills that are exceptionally below those expected for their age.

They make good progress from their low starting points during their time in Nursery and Reception class, but their overall attainment at the end of the Reception Year is still below the national expectations. Children make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematical calculation because of the good opportunities provided. Their personal, social and emotional development is good because teachers place a great emphasis on developing children's confidence and independence and provide good challenge in their work to help them to be successful learners. The sensitive, skilled and caring support of bilingual assistants helps the large majority of pupils who have English as an additional language to overcome their barriers to learning and to make good progress. Staff are constantly engaging children in talk, questioning and discussion to promote their use of language. As a consequence of these actions behaviour is good and children are well-motivated to learn.

The variety of exciting and stimulating learning opportunities, which celebrate the backgrounds of the different cultures in the Early Years Foundation Stage, engage children in their learning. There is a good balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. The outdoor space is safe and attractive, with a wealth of activities to stimulate children's curiosity. Staff take good account of the children's interest and nurture their sense of wonder at the world around them. However, there is no covered outside area to enhance the outside learning opportunities further, by enabling activities to take place in all weathers.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has ensured that regular and rigorous

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assessment procedures are in place. These help staff to know how well pupils are doing and to set the next steps in learning. However, there is a need to develop staff expertise further in the way that they record information about certain areas of learning and pupils' developmental stages. The Early Years Foundation Stage manager is effective in planning the day-to-day activities and developing future planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Most parents' views were supportive of the work of the school. There were some concerns from a minority of parents on a small number of issues. These included the school meeting their child's needs and taking account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors judged that, based on the evidence they gathered, the school has already addressed these issues.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aston Tower Community 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 470 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	46	19	46	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	16	39	23	56	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	44	15	37	3	7	5	12
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	34	21	51	3	7	3	7
The teaching is good at this school	17	41	18	44	3	7	3	7
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	41	19	46	2	5	3	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	46	20	49	2	5	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	27	26	63	2	5	2	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	32	19	46	6	15	3	7
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	27	20	49	5	12	3	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	24	19	46	7	17	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	11	27	22	54	3	7	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	27	23	56	2	5	4	10

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



22 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aston Tower Community Primary School, Birmingham B6 5BE

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. We agree with your parents that you are in safe hands and we know that you enjoy school.

You get on very well with your friends and teachers. We are impressed by the way you welcome and include pupils from other cultures than your own. Your behaviour is good and we are pleased to see that your attendance is improving. You use your responsibilities well to create a caring school community where everyone is valued.

You make satisfactory progress to reach average standards that are broadly in line with other pupils nationally. Your work in writing is not as good as in other subjects. Overall we think teaching is satisfactory but in some classes the work that you get is not challenging enough for those of you who are capable of working at a higher level. Your headteacher and his team lead the school satisfactorily. They know what needs improving and have already helped pupils to gain better results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2009. They are now concentrating on improving your writing. Where there is good teaching it is helping you to progress at a faster rate. Most of you know your targets well and what you need to do to improve further.

To make your education better I have asked your school to raise standards throughout the school by fully implementing a curriculum that takes account of your cultural needs, which helps to promote high quality learning and which incorporates art, literature and music from your cultural heritage. We have also asked the adults to improve the standards of writing by more carefully analysing all the information about the strengths and weaknesses in your work and extending your opportunities in writing. We also want them to further raise the quality of teaching across the school to accelerate your progress.

Thank you once again for making us feel so welcome. We know that your teachers help to make your school a special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be positive, behaving well and making the most of your time at Aston Tower Community Primary School.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards

Lead Inspector

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