

Grace Mary Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103945
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336201
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Ken Buxton 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	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robert Pilsbury
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Brown
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and toured the school with a member of the senior leadership team. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They also met with individual parents and carers at the end of the school day. They observed the school's work and looked at the safeguarding documentation, improvement plans, progress reports, minutes of governors' meetings and records of pupils' progress. Inspectors analysed 56 parents' and carers' questionnaires and took account of staff and pupil questionnaires.

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

- the performance of different groups including the more-able, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and looked-after children in public care
- the quality of teaching and learning in the different year groups
- how well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils
- the leadership's capacity to improve pupils' outcomes.

Information about the school

This school is similar in size to most primary schools. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school provides placements to integrate a small number of autistic pupils into mainstream education. Most pupils are White British and only a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is delivered through the Nursery and Reception classes. The school also runs a pre-school breakfast club and an after-school care club.

The school holds the following awards: Activemark Gold, Healthy Schools Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark and Quality in Extended Services.

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

The school has improved since its last inspection and is now providing a good education. Many aspects contribute to the school's success, including the strong sense of teamwork that exists among those working there and their determination to ensure pupils' safety. The good level of care, guidance and support provided for pupils ensures that they feel safe and important, which boosts their self-esteem. Vulnerable pupils, including those with autism, are supported well by specialist staff and integrated successfully into the everyday life of the school. The overwhelming majority of pupils say they enjoy school and this is confirmed by the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is average. For the past few years, overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been significantly below the national average. This is because the rate at which pupils make progress in the different year groups has varied. The school's leaders have recognised this issue and made it a focus for their improvement priorities. They have also identified the need to improve the quality and presentation of pupils' work, particularly handwriting, and to increase the challenge for more-able pupils so as to enable them to reach the higher levels.

The school's leadership has addressed the areas identified in the previous inspection report successfully. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good overall. Lessons are better paced and greater attention is paid to ensuring that tasks and activities meet the needs and interests of the pupils. Consequently, the school is demonstrating its good capacity for improvement. The senior leaders are accurate in their monitoring of teaching and learning and they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they are ambitious in their plans and are keen to ensure that the stronger elements of teaching, that are evident in some classes, are implemented consistently across the school. For example, they intend to ensure that all teachers make better and more effective use of assessment information to determine pupils' next steps in learning. Governors play a vital role in supporting the school's development, but their duties and responsibilities are not shared evenly between the different members. This has resulted in an unbalanced work load and a governing body that is not best positioned to challenge the school's decisions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science so that by the end of Key Stage 2 it exceeds the national average by:
 - improving the consistency at which pupils make progress, particularly in Key Stage 1

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- improving the presentation of pupils' work, especially their handwriting
- having higher expectations of the more-able pupils and increasing the number of pupils who achieve the higher levels
- ensuring that pupils are clear about their next steps in learning by sharing good teaching practice across all classes.
- Increase the governing body's involvement in the school's development by:
 - agreeing appropriate responsibilities for individual governors
 - making sure that induction for new governors helps them to understand information about the school's performance.

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

Pupils are positive about school and have good attitudes to learning. They behave well and listen attentively in lessons. They display good manners and are respectful to one another and adults in the school. In previous years, pupils' progress across Key Stage 1 has been inadequate and their attainment has been low. The school's accurate information on performance shows that current Year 2 pupils are making good progress and are well on track to attain standards that match or exceed the national average. Similarly, Year 6 pupils are also making good progress and the school's assessment data show that their attainment will be higher than in previous years and inspectors' observations of current work endorse this judgement. Although provision is being made for more-able pupils in lessons, it often results in their being required to complete more work rather than providing activities that will challenge them and extend their learning. The support given to pupils requiring additional help is targeted well, resulting in these pupils making good progress. The staff are particularly vigilant of the progress made by vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and they take great care to ensure that they receive the support they need.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Relationships are positive across the school. Pupils' moral and social development is particularly strong. This was clearly evident from their response during a very good assembly observed during the inspection, where they learned how important it was to do their best and never give up. An outstanding feature was the exceptional quality of the choir's singing, which captured the moment beautifully.

Pupils say they are happy and feel safe at school, and they are. They have a good understanding of why it is important to lead a healthy life. There is a good uptake in sporting activities and all pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 benefit from their swimming lessons. Pupils contribute well to both the school's development, through initiatives arising from the school council, and the wider community, by raising funds for local charities. They relish opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as the recent initiative for Year 5 pupils to support younger children in the Nursery develop their language skills.

Recent initiatives to improve pupils' attendance are successful. Attendance levels are

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currently satisfactory and improving. Induction arrangements work well and pupils are prepared appropriately for the transfer to secondary school.

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	2
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?

There is some variability in the quality of teaching but it is good overall. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the best teaching ensured that pupils worked quietly in a purposeful atmosphere where expectations were both explicit and appropriately high. Teachers' planning of lessons is generally of a high quality. One of its strengths is the level of detail provided to support staff and other adults working with the class. This attention to detail helps to ensure that all staff know and understand how they are to facilitate pupils' learning. Teachers generally plan appropriate work to match pupils' differing abilities. Most teachers' marking is in line with school policy. In the best cases, their comments give pupils suggestions and advice about how to improve their work. In some classes not enough is expected of the more-able pupils and there are occasions when they mark time. When teaching is less effective teachers do not make their expectations clear enough about the quality of work they want. As a consequence, the

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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standard of handwriting and the quality of presentation are not good enough.

The curriculum provides well thought-out learning opportunities. It is adjusted and adapted successfully to take account of pupils' specific needs. There are some good links between subjects so that pupils can apply relevant skills in different areas. It has been enhanced by a wide range of activities, including visitors and off-site visits and after-school activities that contribute well to pupils' enjoyment, development and well-being.

The quality of pastoral care is good and meets pupils' needs. Staff are informed about and knowledgeable of vulnerable pupils' needs and take care to ensure that they receive good support. Staff work closely with families and a wide range of local agencies to ensure a high level of support is provided to those in need. The pre-school breakfast club and the after-school club contribute well to pupils' development.

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 school is led well by a strong leadership team who have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are ambitious for the school and have created a strong sense of teamwork focused on delivering high-quality education in all year groups. Improving teaching is seen as vitally important to realising the school's vision of being a high performer. Strenuous efforts have been made, through increased use of coaching and training, which have raised the quality of teaching and improved pupils' learning.

Target setting is well established and pupils' progress is monitored carefully, contributing to improving their outcomes. Considerable work has taken place to promote pupils' equality of opportunity. The school has also identified the need to close the gap between boys' and girls' achievements in different subjects. The leadership has begun implementing appropriate action that has started to have the desired impact.

The school is aware of its responsibility to the local community and has taken steps to promote pupils' understanding of living in a culturally diverse society. Further initiatives are being planned to increase governors' involvement in leading the development of pupils' awareness and experience of different cultures and religions.

The leadership has established good procedures for safeguarding pupils. All staff have completed child protection training and take their duties very seriously. Governors play

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their part in ensuring pupils' safety by conducting regular health and safety checks of the site. They are organised appropriately and contribute to the smooth running of the school. They have a broad understanding of the school's performance and are kept up-to-date with developments through the headteacher's regular reports. Recent changes to the governing body have left newly appointed governors insufficiently familiar with how to interpret and analyse numerical information on pupils' attainment and use their findings to determine whether the school's response is satisfactory. Consequently, more experienced governors have had to take on an overly heavy burden of responsibility.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The school has established successful arrangements for the induction of children into the Nursery class. These include home visits, visits to school and the distribution of information packs to families. In response to parental and carer feedback the school's leaders have decided to distribute information packs earlier in the year so that families have the opportunity to read them before beginning the induction programme.

Children's attainment on entry is below what might typically be expected. Language development is noticeably lower than is usual for children of this age. However, on entry to the Nursery, children settle quickly and engage in learning and begin to make progress. By the end of the Reception Year the vast majority of children have made good progress and their attainment is broadly average. This success is due to the good quality of provision across the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly the effective teaching. Support staff play a strong and important role in ensuring children do well.

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The classrooms are spacious and organised well to encourage children to learn about their world. Both classrooms are fortunate to have their own outdoor-learning environment, which adds to the good quality of provision. Some of the outdoor equipment in the Nursery area is currently out of action, which limits children's learning opportunities. The leadership is good and focused strongly on ensuring that children make good progress and are prepared well for the start of Year 1.

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

A very large majority of those parents and carers who returned questionnaires are pleased with their child's experience at the school. They think the school is led well and they agree unanimously that the quality of teaching is good. A very small minority feel more effective action could be taken to deal with unacceptable behaviour. The school has clear procedures to promote good behaviour. These were seen to work well as the inspectors judged behaviour to be good both in classrooms and around the school. Behaviour was exemplary during the whole-school assembly. Similarly, a few parents and carers also were critical of the school's efforts to encourage pupils to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors judged the impact of the school's work on this issue to be good, as pupils were able to explain clearly why it is important to eat healthily and to take regular physical exercise, and participated readily in sport.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Grace Mary 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 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 238 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	61	21	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	37	66	17	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	46	27	48	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	54	25	45	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	57	24	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	48	29	52	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	52	20	36	5	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)	19	34	32	57	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	45	28	50	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	43	26	46	4	7	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	30	33	59	2	4	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	25	45	28	50	0	0	2	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	55	22	39	2	4	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.



29 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Grace Mary Primary School, Oldbury, B69 1LD

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you to find out about your school. Thank you to everyone who also completed questionnaires. These provided us with a great deal of useful information about your views. It is clear that you go to a friendly and welcoming school. It provides you with a good and improving quality of education.

These are the main things that we found out about your school.

? Children starting in Nursery and Reception settle quickly and make good progress.

?? You feel cared for and safe.

You enjoy school and want to do your best.

?? You find lessons interesting and feel you learn a lot.

Most of you are making good progress and will be prepared well for your move to secondary school at the end of Year 6.

?? You enjoy the wide range of activities that enhance the curriculum, including the after-school activities.

?? You enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school.

Although the school is doing well we have suggested the following ways it could do even better.

?? We have asked the teachers to help you to make faster progress and reach higher levels in English, mathematics and science.

We have also asked the governors to take on more responsibility for helping the school to improve. In particular, we have asked them to support ways to help you work with children from other cultures and backgrounds.

We have taken away many good memories of your school and hope that you achieve all your ambitions that you told us about.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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