

Yew Tree Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103974
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336208
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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	475
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Dearden
Headteacher	Tree Primary School
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons, and undertook other general observations of classes, display and pupils' work, and provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They held meetings with governors, staff, various groups of pupils, a local authority representative, and met with parents and carers at the start of the school day. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring files, safeguarding documentation, governors' minutes, the head teacher's reports to the governing body, and information provided for parents. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 111 parents, 32 members of staff and 113 pupils.

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

- The progress being made by all groups of pupils across the school over the past three years, since the school was established in 2006.
- The ways in which teaching, and the school's developing curriculum, is raising standards for all pupils in the core subjects.
- The ways in which assessment is being used in lessons to support pupils' learning.
- How the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage is supporting the progress and development of children under the age of five.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) by both pupils and teachers as an emerging strength of the school in support of pupils' learning and progress.

Information about the school

This is a much larger than average sized primary school, serving a large housing estate in Sandwell. The school was established in 2006 as a result of the amalgamation of two local primary schools. It continues to operate on two sites, about half a mile apart, but there are plans to move the school to a single site from 2011. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The percentage of girls on roll is below average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, but the proportion of those for whom English is an additional language is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. Pupil mobility is very high, with only just over half of those starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage continuing their education through to Year 6. The school has gained a Platinum Healthy Schools award, the BECTA ICT Mark, a Basic Skills Quality Mark, and a local Excellence in Sandwell award for its community work.

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

This is a good school. As a parent/carer wrote, 'It is a fine school with great principles.' It has made significant improvement since its creation in 2006 from two local schools, the standards in the largest of which were low. Attainment is now broadly average by Year 6, across both school sites, in English, mathematics and science. A legacy of underachievement is being eradicated. This is because the tracking of pupils' progress is ensuring close monitoring and support for each individual pupil. Consequently, the progress made by each year group is good, and underpinned effectively by good support and interventions. The school makes effective use of the wide range of information it maintains on its pupils to aid their learning. Its track record over the past three years is the result of very hard work by a dedicated team of staff, led by an outstanding headteacher. In their questionnaires, 100 per cent of staff and pupils, and the overwhelming majority of parents/carers, agreed strongly that the school is led well. Inspectors concur with these views. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

The large majority of children enter the Nursery with standards which are low compared with those expected nationally. The language and communication skills of many children are underdeveloped. Even by the time they move to the Reception class, the majority are working below expectations across all areas of learning. Nevertheless, the very good work undertaken in the Nursery to develop children's personal and social skills enables them to make good progress in Reception. Consequently, the majority of children transferring to Year 1 in September 2009 have gained sufficient skills to support their basic National Curriculum work. By summer 2009, pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reached standards not significantly different from the national average. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 either met or exceeded their challenging targets in English and mathematics. The rate of progress made by pupils over the three years of the school's existence compares favourably with that expected of the best 25 per cent of schools nationally.

Through its own good self-evaluation, the school has identified some important next steps on its road to further improvement. First, as part of national strategies for assessing pupils' progress (APP), the school has introduced successfully additional methods for supporting pupils' progress in numeracy. Even during one windy playtime, staff were encouraging pupils in Years 1 and 2 to take part in counting games as they all had great fun catching falling autumn leaves. The school is now starting to extend successfully its use of APP methods. Furthermore, it has recognised the need to improve pupils' reading comprehension skills, and enable them to interpret better non-fiction texts. As a parent/carer wrote, 'The school has recognised my child's love for reading, and is encouraging it further.' Secondly, the good developments in the curriculum are

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making what is taught increasingly relevant for pupils. Links made between subjects are supporting learning well. However, more work is required to help an even higher proportion of pupils to gain the nationally expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science, and to challenge further potentially higher attaining pupils. The school is in the process of reviewing its provision for gifted and/or talented pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise further the standards gained by pupils by the end of Year 6 by:
 - extending APP strategies to literacy as well as numeracy
 - developing further the school's strategies to promote pupils' reading comprehension skills, particularly their interpretation of text
 - using the good current curriculum developments to plan for additional work which will help an even higher proportion of pupils to gain the nationally expected Level 4, and above, in all core subjects
 - Using the new curriculum developments to plan additional work to challenge further potentially higher attaining pupils.

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

All parents/carers responding to the questionnaires agreed their children enjoy school. Pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons and around school are good. There are some challenging individual pupils, and as one commented, 'This is a nice school and a healthy school, but sometimes behaviour slips!' Nevertheless, pupils are polite, and show very good levels of kindness and consideration for each other. Behaviour management is firm but fair, applied consistently and staff and pupils have high expectations of each other. As another pupil wrote, 'It's fantastic that all the teachers listen to us and give us a chance to have our say.' The fact that pupils understand the importance of listening to each other stands them in good stead for their future well-being. It also enables pupils to engage well with those from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Pupils' enjoyment in learning is reflected in much improved attendance rates. A year ago, these were low, but throughout 2009 they have risen to be consistently average. Pupils appreciate the ways in which their teachers make learning interesting. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used particularly well to help raise standards. Older pupils were making some excellent progress in understanding fair trade principles and using their research to good effect in creating computer-generated posters. Good progress is also being promoted through the development of pupils' thinking skills. This approach is enabling individuals and different groups of pupils to gain an increasing understanding that there are different ways of solving problems. It is being applied particularly well to help those pupils who find learning difficult. Thinking skills are being applied effectively to raise standards in numeracy, and are starting to be used throughout the school in literacy to improve pupils' comprehension and

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interpretative skills. Such strategies are being used well to promote pupils' self-confidence, independent learning skills, and enabling pupils in all year groups to achieve well.

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

How effective is the provision?

The care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils and their families are outstanding. Parents/carers comment that, 'The whole school ethos is excellent, taking the welfare, health and safety of children very seriously'; and, 'No matter how small a problem, the staff always find a solution.' A pupil wrote, 'My school is fab and the other children and staff are always there for me when I need them.' Inspectors agree that the school provides an outstanding learning environment where all pupils are seen as unique individuals, and their well-being is at the heart of the school. There are excellent links with a variety of outside agencies to provide extra support for individuals. The Family Support Manager strengthens considerably the school's work with extended services. Through the Nurture Group, parents are becoming involved increasingly effectively in their children's learning. The school's work with families and pupils is embedded deeply

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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at all levels.

Teaching is good across both school sites. Where outstanding teaching was seen this was particularly creative and imaginative. Teachers make good use of high quality resources to support learning. Parts of the school resemble a natural history museum with educational displays of snake skin, a lion head and puffer fish. Teachers are good at sharing and explaining 'steps to success' with pupils so they know exactly what they are doing and why. Assessment to support learning is used well. Questioning is used effectively in class to gauge pupils' learning, and workbooks are marked regularly. However, although marking sums up how well a pupil has done, it does not always reinforce sufficiently the key points from teachers' good oral feedback.

The good curriculum is responsive to pupils' needs and provides a good level of personalised and individualised learning. A creative curriculum suits well the needs of a broad range of pupils; for example in supporting the practice of key literacy and numeracy skills even when composing music or making movies. Pupils gain good experiences through a range of visits which support their topic work. They also learn effectively about personal safety through looking at real life scenarios. Planning ensures good dove-tailing of work across year groups and key stages. However, although improving, planning does not yet pitch work at a consistently appropriate level for the most able. Nevertheless, there is a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities to meet and enhance the interests of pupils across all year groups. Pupils appreciate particularly the themed weeks, such as those for French, ICT and poetry.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

There are some significant strengths in the leadership and management of the school. This results in very effective teamwork at all levels. The school has a healthy balance of younger staff who are eager to learn their leadership craft, and those more experienced who are willing to share their seasoned practice. This makes for a lively, but thoroughly professional approach. It also ensures the effective and cooperative management of teaching and learning. The close monitoring of individual pupil's progress enables staff to analyse effectively the performance of all its different groups. This attention to diversity is summed up well by a poster in one hall which states, 'The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.'

Pupils confirm they feel very safe in school. All practical systems to ensure pupils are not

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placed at any risk are fully in place, and very robust. Good governance ensures that the school is properly challenged and held to account. Consequently, a productive partnership between the school and the governing body is effective in driving and securing school improvement.

Since 2006, the school has inevitably looked more inward at its own local community in order to establish a cohesive school, across two separate sites, and to gain the trust of local families. This it has done very successfully. It is now starting to look beyond its more local area, and has a good action plan to enable it to do so. This is a forward thinking school, and the potential opportunities for further improvement, as a result of coming together on a single site in 2010-11, are not being missed.

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	2
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

As a direct result of good leadership, planning and organisation, the school copes well with the especially high mobility rates of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Only half of those children transferring from the Nursery to Reception in September 2008 have continued through to start Year 1 in September 2009. Ensuring continuity of education is therefore a problem for the school. In spite of this, children make good progress because of the individual care and support they receive from staff across both sites. Home visits when children first start school, and close support for families, ensure the establishment of important links. The information provided for parents/carers to help support their children's development is good. Consequently, working relationships with families are very productive.

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Assessment systems are good. Staff undertake daily assessments of children to monitor closely their progress against the key areas of learning. Assessment records are used effectively to guide children as to their next steps in learning. The school has recognised that the performance of boys in the early years is not as good as that of girls, and this is being resolved through a programme of social and emotional development. However, being on a split site, and to overcome transport problems, families choose currently to take their children to one site or the other. The scope for social interaction on the part of younger children is, therefore, limited to smaller groups on each site. Nevertheless, staff are particularly well-skilled in engaging children in conversation through questions. Children are encouraged constantly to talk about what they are doing. This is a very important focus as children's language and social skills are often underdeveloped when they first join the Nursery. Resources to support all areas of learning are good, used well and provide good stimuli for the children's creative, imaginative and sensory development. Children are provided with a good balance of adult led and free-play activities in both indoor and pleasant outdoor settings.

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

Almost all parents and carers are supportive of the school. A very small minority indicated some concern about behaviour management, but inspectors find no cause for anxiety. The views of the overwhelming majority can be summed up by one family who wrote: 'The staff, governors and parent volunteers work wonders to make the school a safe, happy and caring environment for the children. They should be commended for this, and the results that the children in Year 6 now attain.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Yew Tree 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 475 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	64	40	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	53	51	46	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	46	58	52	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	50	52	47	2	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	63	39	35	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	53	50	45	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	51	50	45	2	2	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)	51	46	51	46	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	59	53	48	43	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	41	52	47	6	5	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	45	55	50	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	62	56	47	42	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	49	68	49	1	1	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.



19 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Yew Tree Primary School, Walsall, WS5 4DX

We would like to thank you all for welcoming us so warmly into your school. You live up to the motto displayed in the foyer at both of your school sites: 'Excellence and happiness in a caring, family school'. We enjoyed talking with you and were very impressed by your attitudes to learning and the way you take responsibility for each other. You helped us to understand why yours is a good school.

These are the things we found are best about your school:

the staff take care of you really well whilst you are in school

your school is led and managed well, and this is helping to raise standards

your teachers work together well as a team, and set you a good example

you behave well, and show good attitudes towards school and learning

staff in the Nursery and Reception work hard to ensure you get a good start

you are making good progress towards the challenging targets set for you

your learning is supported well by good teaching and a good curriculum

Your school has come a long way in the past three years and is improving well.

These are the things we have asked your school to do now in order to raise further the standards you gain by the end of Year 6:

to extend to your literacy work some of the successful methods your teachers are using to assess your numeracy work and help you make progress

to develop further the ways by which your teachers are helping you to improve your reading comprehension skills, and the ways you can interpret text

to help even more of you to gain the nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science

To plan for additional work which will challenge even further those of you who are gaining higher standards or who may have particular gifts and talents.

You have a saying at your school that, 'Yew Tree kids believe they can succeed.' We know you do, and we know you can.

With all best wishes for the future,

Michael Miller

Lead inspector

APP is a process of structured periodic assessment for mathematics, reading and writing. □ It supports teachers by promoting a broad curriculum and by developing teachers' skills in assessing standards of attainment and the progress children have made;

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/primaryframework/assessment/app/wiapp>

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