

Brandhall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103976
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	336209
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Morrison

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	0–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Frost
Headteacher	Elaine Fitzgerald
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. A total of 22 lessons taught by 11 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school leaders and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at curriculum planning, data on pupils' achievement including their current progress, documents about safeguarding, plans for improvement, pupils' work and records of the school's own monitoring of its performance. They also analysed 67 questionnaires that were returned by parents and carers, together with 65 from pupils.

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

- current attainment and rates of progress in English throughout the school and in mathematics at Key Stage 1
- current rates of attendance and persistent absence
- the effectiveness of teaching in securing good progress for all groups of pupils, particularly for potentially higher attainers in all key stages and for boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of leaders and managers on sustained school improvement.

Information about the school

Brandhall Primary School is a large school, where about a quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and the majority of these have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.

The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a nursery class, which provides part-time education, and two full-time reception classes. A new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage was appointed in September 2009. Governors also manage Little Acres Children's Centre and Little Acres day nursery which provides full day care for children aged 0-5. A wide range of family support services and community facilities are part of its extended service. Governors also manage before- and after-school care for pupils.

The school has gained a number of awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark, the Quality in Extended Services Award, and has Healthy Schools (Gold) status.

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

Brandhall Primary is a good school. Amongst its many strengths are the good personal development of pupils, its exciting curriculum and the good start to children's education provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The headteacher provides strong leadership of the school and Children's Centre, and her good understanding of the needs of pupils and their families is shared by staff. Together, the school and Children's Centre work with a large number of support agencies to assist families and ensure that their needs are well met. As a result, both settings have developed a caring and welcoming environment where good safeguarding procedures help to ensure that pupils are safe and enjoy their learning.

Children start in day care or the nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. Carefully structured activities and highly effective adult interventions, particularly to strengthen language and communication skills, ensure that children make good progress. As one parent commented, 'My child's teachers make reading, writing and maths fun so she has gained confidence and is interested in learning.' The environment is exciting so children enjoy a wide range of activities and become absorbed in their learning, for example exploring the effect of mixing different coloured paints in the outdoor stream.

Pupils' progress, including that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good and attainment, although still average, is rising. The school has worked hard to ensure that boys enjoy learning, for example in Year 6 where pupils make replicas of medieval artefacts and use them well in role play. The curriculum is carefully planned so that more able pupils are given sufficiently challenging work, although this is not yet consistent for pupils in Key Stage 1. Writing skills are also less well developed in Key Stage 1 because pupils are not always given enough opportunities to talk about their work and extend their vocabulary.

Attendance has improved steadily and significantly over the last year as a result of initiatives such as text messaging parents and weekly awards for the class with highest attendance. However, the school recognises that it has not yet done all it can to encourage higher attendance amongst a small minority of persistent absentees.

Pupils learn to be tolerant and help one another and are eager to take on responsibilities such as membership of the school council or distributing toast at break times. Pupils' behaviour is well managed and is generally good. They consider the experiences of others and gain a good understanding of different cultures, for example through work in religious education and the arts as well as through developing links with a school in Guatemala.

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Teaching is good. There is some outstanding teaching in Year 6 and the Early Years Foundation Stage, but the school has recognised that lessons in Key Stage 1, though satisfactory, do not always provide pupils with enough challenge and interest to progress as well as they can. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but marking is not always linked closely enough to their learning targets and does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

The school has successfully focused on improving teaching and pupils' progress, and remaining weaknesses are accurately identified. The headteacher has high expectations of her staff and her good leadership, together with that of middle leaders, underpins the school's good capacity for sustained further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress in Key Stage 1, especially in writing, by:
 - developing pupils' vocabulary, speaking and listening skills
 - providing work that is well matched to the needs of more able pupils so that they reach the high standards of which they are capable.
- Increase the proportion of high quality teaching so that, by the end of the 2010/11 school year 80% of lessons are good or better through:
 - sharing current good and outstanding practice regarding the expectations and engagement of pupils and the pace at which they progress
 - ensuring that teachers' marking provides pupils with consistently good advice on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase attendance to at least 95% for the 2010/11 school year by developing further incentives for pupils to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

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

Pupils enjoy learning. Their progress is tracked carefully and prompt action is taken to address any underachievement. As a result all groups of pupils achieve well overall across the school, although in lessons seen during the inspection some more able pupils were not making as much progress in Key Stage 1, where teaching was not always challenging enough. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported by knowledgeable teaching assistants and as a result make similar progress to their peers.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, careful consideration of the interests of boys has ensured that activities stimulate their learning, for example when considering the different sizes of blocks needed to build a wall in the 'builders' yard', and boys now achieve as well as girls.

In Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress, and the actions taken to improve progress in mathematics, such as providing a reason for learning, have been effective. For example, in Year 1 pupils recognise the purpose behind counting in fives to check the price of items in a shop. Pupils attain less well in writing because they are not

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always given enough opportunities to talk about a topic and learn new vocabulary. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils were asked to write about the personality of a character from a book, but because they did not understand the word 'personality' they wrote simple physical descriptions using limited vocabulary.

The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average for the last three years and current pupils' work confirms that this has been maintained. They make good progress across the key stage and this accelerates in Year 6 as a result of outstanding teaching.

Pupils say they feel safe at school because staff care for them and any misbehaviour or bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and enjoy a range of exercise and sporting activities. There is a strong sense of working together to help one another in school and pupils make a good contribution to the wider community through collections for local and national charities. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Most pupils try hard to do their best and this, together with their increasing awareness of the world of work as a result of enterprise activities such as raising money for school trips, visits from local professionals, and their developing basic skills results in them being well prepared for the next stage of their education and later life.

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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

The best teaching is characterised by high expectations of pupil involvement, consistent routines, good relationships and the sharp use of measurable success criteria so pupils know when they have achieved their targets. This good practice is not yet effectively shared across the whole school in order to improve satisfactory teaching. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but written comments do not always make clear what pupils need to do to improve.

The curriculum is stimulating and captures pupils' interest while paying careful attention to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. This was seen in a Year 4 lesson, where pupils were engaged in finding a missing professor using their mathematical skills. This has helped improve achievement, which is now good. Learning is enriched by a variety of after-school clubs and interesting visits and visitors.

A particular strength of the school's care, guidance and support is the way it works with a range of agencies to help pupils who might be vulnerable and gives a high level of support to families with emotional and social needs. Pupils who attend the before- and after-school clubs enjoy stimulating activities and their needs are well met. Parents are given good information about transition between key stages and to high school, though actions to improve attendance have yet to have a full impact.

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 and middle leaders share a clear vision for the school. Self-evaluation is used effectively as the basis for school improvement planning so that inadequate teaching has been eliminated and steps are now being taken to improve satisfactory teaching to good. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and identifies quickly the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored through termly pupil progress meetings. As plans have reflected leaders' high expectations for all groups of pupils, weaknesses in mathematics and writing have been addressed in Key Stage 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the gap between boys' and girls' attainment has closed.

Governors provide the school with a satisfactory level of support and challenge and ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties. Safeguarding procedures are good,

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ensuring that pupils are safe and secure in school. Regularly updated training supports staff in carrying out their safeguarding obligations well.

Together with the Children's Centre, the school has extensive and effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies which make a strong contribution to pupils' well-being and learning, and help it to promote community cohesion at both a local and international level. However, school leaders know that links in the United Kingdom are less strong and have firm plans to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different cultures and beliefs elsewhere in their own country.

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	3
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 Children's Centre gives children's welfare the highest priority and provides good quality day care which complies with the requirements for registration. Adults' good understanding of how young children grow and develop successfully promotes children's learning and their social, emotional and physical development. The Children's Centre is led and managed well and has developed strong curriculum links with the Early Years Foundation Stage so children move confidently between the two settings. Children's achievement is rising as a result of an increasing focus on communication, language and literacy, particularly for boys, whose progress has been slower in the past.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and developments this year have resulted in imaginative use of a wide variety of resources. Children enjoy working and playing together, both indoors and out, in an exciting learning environment that reflects their different backgrounds. A structured programme for teaching letters and

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sounds has been introduced, and as a result children now make good progress in writing and reading. There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities and adults model speaking and listening well, developing and extending vocabulary.

Because children enjoy a wide range of carefully planned and exciting activities based on accurate assessment of their progress, they grow in confidence and independence.

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

Parents and carers are supportive of the school, and the overwhelming majority that responded to the inspection questionnaire say that their children's needs are met so that they are well prepared for their future and enjoy school. Some individual comments indicated concerns about behaviour and bullying, but inspectors found behaviour to be good and pupils say that any bullying that does occur is dealt with well by staff. A small minority believe that their views are not sufficiently taken into account. I Inspectors found that the school has acted on parental suggestions such as changes to security and playgrounds, and tries to tailor ways of consulting with parents and carers to meet their needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Brandhall 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 311 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	52	31	46	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	58	24	36	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	36	54	24	36	5	7	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	49	29	43	4	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	54	25	37	3	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	46	28	42	4	6	3	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	46	33	49	2	3	1	1
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)	32	48	33	49	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	39	39	58	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	36	33	49	9	13	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	34	29	43	10	15	3	4
The school is led and managed effectively	32	48	28	42	3	4	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	57	22	33	5	7	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



9 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brandhall Primary School, Oldbury B68 0ST

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and showing us what you are learning. We know from talking to you and reading your questionnaires that you enjoy school and being with your friends. Because you were so polite and helpful we found out quite a lot about your school, which we have judged to be giving you a good education.

Your teachers care for you and look after you well so you feel safe.

The children in the Children's Centre and the Early Years Foundation Stage get a good start to their school life.

In a lot of lessons you enjoy exciting activities and your teachers try to make learning fun for you, so you are actively involved.

You make good overall progress, especially in Year 6.

Those of you who find work difficult are given lots of support so you can keep up with your classmates.

In order that your school gets even better we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to do the following:

- help those of you in Key Stage 1 to do better, especially in writing, by giving you more chances to speak and listen to each other and learn new words, and by making sure those of you who find learning easy are given challenging tasks so you really have to think hard
- make more lessons as good as the best ones are now, and ensure that the marking of your work helps you all to know what you need to do to improve your work
- make sure that more of you come to school regularly and praise those of you who do.

All the adults in your school want you to do well. You can help them by making sure you come to school every day and by always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Helen Morrison

Lead inspector

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