

Little Aston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124127
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340496
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Gerald Griffin

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Milne
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Pearce
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by 7 teachers. They observed break times, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and spoke to parents and carers at the school gate. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, progress records, teachers' lesson plans, school improvement plans, policies and reports. They analysed 91 pupils' questionnaires, 14 staff questionnaires and 103 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- progress of higher attaining pupils and Indian heritage pupils across the school
- the quality of the challenge that teachers provide in lessons to secure good progress
- the effectiveness of improvement planning to accelerated pupils' progress.

Information about the school

Little Aston is an average size primary school. Three fifths of pupils come from White British families and one fifth are from Indian families. The remainder come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. One third of pupils speak English as an additional language at home. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Most of these have dyslexia or moderate learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorder. A larger than average proportion of pupils join and leave the school other than at the normal times. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises a Reception class. The school has recently gained a number of awards including one for its information and communication technology and for its Healthy Schools status. Sparkletots day care for 3 to 4 year olds is managed by the governors and was included in this inspection.

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

Little Aston is a good school in which pupils develop into mature and articulate young people. Attainment is above average and achievement is good. Parents are very pleased with the school. Typically one wrote, 'My child is extremely happy in school. She is very well cared for and is making excellent progress.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They feel very safe in school and well looked after. They are polite to adults and to each other and their behaviour is good.

Recently the school experienced staffing difficulties which stalled improvement. Now that staffing is stable, pupils' progress has accelerated and is good. This is especially so in reading and writing. While progress in mathematics is also good it is not as rapid as it is in English because pupils' calculations are not always accurate or quick enough, which means their ability to solve mathematical problems is a relative weakness. The school recognises this and has appropriate plans to provide pupils with more opportunities to practise these skills. Since the last inspection, achievement, teaching, curriculum, leadership and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved and are good. Plans have successfully tackled the relatively slower progress of Indian heritage and higher attaining pupils. The headteacher's unrelenting and passionate drive to improve the school is clearly broadcast and enthusiastically embraced by the staff. Middle leaders support the headteacher well and are taking responsibility for developments in their areas. Leaders' rigorous monitoring of the school's performance provides them with secure and accurate information for self-evaluation. This successful leadership record shows the school has a good capacity to improve further.

In lessons, pupils make good progress because teaching challenges them well. They have positive attitudes towards learning and work hard. Teachers use resources effectively to engage pupils and develop their learning. Occasionally the pace of learning slows, typically when lesson introductions last too long. The lively curriculum presents pupils with relevant and interesting work, which is contributing to their improved learning. The 'Learning Platform', which can be accessed on the internet by pupils and parents at home, is making a highly effective contribution to learning. Pupils are cared for very well. Staff are always on hand to resolve any problems that pupils bring to them. Sparkletots provides a very safe environment and a good standard of care and education for its children.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure a consistently good pace to learning so that pupils are fully stretched by:

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- ensuring lesson introductions do not last too long.
- Improve progress in mathematics by:
 - sharpening the speed and accuracy of pupils' calculations
 - provide more opportunities to practise solving mathematical problems.

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

All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak languages other than English at home, enjoy learning and achieve well. Pupils who join the school part-way through a key stage also make good progress. The school very works hard to provide extra help for the large number who need to catch up work that they have missed in the past. The learning observed in lessons during the inspection was good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils were curious and confidently discussed ideas in small groups and with their class without fear of making a mistake. This promoted well their communication skills, understanding and confidence. Pupils' planning and research skills, especially on the internet, are well developed and many are already proficient as independent learners. They assess their own work and that of their peers accurately against targets, which gives them a clear insight into their progress and how they can improve their work.

The progress of higher attaining pupils has accelerated because teachers now use progress data well to plan challenging tasks that make them work hard. The school has successfully tackled the slower progress of Indian pupils in two ways. Firstly, teachers have improved these pupils' understanding of text so that they now make accurate interpretations of stories, accounts and test questions. Secondly, they have provided extra help and advice for their parents so that they can better support their children's education at home.

Pupils say that bullying is rare and that any cases are dealt with immediately by the school. The school's national award shows pupils' commitment to eating a healthy diet and they take plenty of exercise. However, their understanding of diseases which can be caused by unhealthy lifestyles is not particularly strong. Pupils collect generously for charity and are keen to help the school improve, for example by telling teachers how they learn best. Above average standards in the basic skills and positive attitudes means that pupils' preparation for secondary school and their future working lives is good. Pupils reflect maturely on their feelings and those of others. A strong moral code underpins their good behaviour. Pupils cooperate very well in groups and readily help each other. They have a well developed understanding of the diversity of British culture.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The interesting and relevant work that teachers plan captures pupils' imagination and as a result pupils are keen to learn. Relationships in lessons are very positive. The school is correctly checking to ensure lesson introductions do not last too long. Marking and other feedback provide pupils with clear information about their progress and how they can make their work even better. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to learning, especially by working sensitively with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. For example, lively assemblies get pupils thinking about right and wrong and provide them with many opportunities to think about their own and other' behaviour. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a focus of the curriculum and this is reflected in the school's national award. ICT gives pupils' work real relevance and promotes good communication between home and school, which keeps parents informed and involved in their children's learning. The school's plans to improve pupils' calculating skills are appropriate. A good range of popular sports, music and other clubs and a wealth of educational visits add to pupils' enjoyment of school and broaden their experience.

Staff use their detailed knowledge of pupils skilfully to provide each child with a good standard of pastoral care. The school welcomes pupils who join part way through their primary schooling and carefully thought-out induction arrangements provide them with a positive start. Many of these pupils told inspectors how quickly they had settled into school and made new friends. The school's close liaison with local nursery and secondary schools ensure pupils' smooth transition from one phase of education to the

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next. The school's targeted support for pupils whose circumstances have the potential to make them vulnerable is effective.

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?

Leaders set challenging targets which are clearly communicated to staff, parents and pupils. Checks on pupils' progress are rigorous and if it slows, extra help is quickly provided so that they can catch up. There are many examples of how leaders have strengthened the quality of teaching. For example, they have sharpened teachers' planning to ensure high ability pupils are given work that provides appropriate challenge. The governors are very supportive of the school, work hard on its behalf and challenge it robustly over its performance.

The school successfully places a high priority on safety and safeguarding. The checks that the school makes on the suitability of adults to work with children are rigorous. Child protection procedures are robust, regularly updated and fully meet current safeguarding requirements. The way the school is tackling previous inequalities for higher attaining and Indian heritage pupils to improve their academic outcomes shows its plans effectively to promote equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination.

The school is a happy and harmonious society in which pupils from all backgrounds integrate well. There are many good examples of how the school promotes cohesion in the wider community. For example, it provides placements that enable local people to gain vocational qualifications. The school's links with communities in India that reflect its pupils' heritage, and with other schools abroad, are rapidly developing and making a valuable contribution to pupils' awareness of cultures worldwide.

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

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	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with levels of attainment expected for their age. Nearly all reach the early learning goals and some exceed them. Boys and girls make similarly good progress across all the areas of learning. Children are well behaved and are polite to each other and adults. Their personal development is good. Children are cared for well. Parents say they feel well informed about their child's progress. Children in Sparkletots are very safe in the setting's stimulating environment and they are looked after very well by the committed staff.

Children really enjoy their learning. In a lesson seen during the inspection, children were enthusiastically developing the 'Pirates and Mermaids' theme in chosen activities. One group were rapidly improving their creative skills by making and decorating a pirate ship. They readily shared apparatus and materials and evaluated their efforts by discussing how they could be better with each other and staff. Another group were improving their writing skills by making a list of people to invite to a mermaid party. They worked with a good degree of independence and only asked an adult for help to check that their spellings were correct. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning and the stimulating outdoor area is used effectively to develop learning.

Teaching in Sparkletots is good and children make good progress in each area of learning, especially their personal development. For example, children routinely wash their hands before eating a range of healthy snacks and school lunch. Children have good opportunities to sample life in Reception, which prepares them well for entering school.

Leaders plan regular assessments of each child's gains and these are used well by staff to plan challenging next steps in children's learning. They recognise that assistants in the setting need to improve their direction of child-initiated work and leaders are providing training to support this. The leaders of Sparkletots liaise closely with Reception staff to ensure that the work of the setting reflects good Early Years Foundation Stage practice.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

About half of the parents and carers returned a questionnaire. Many of them commented about how happy their children were at school and how well they are cared for. Parents and carers of children who had recently transferred to the school said how welcoming the school was and how quickly their child had settled into the school. Several wrote about how well the school resolves their concerns. There were positive comments too about the workshops that inform parents about how children learn and how parents can support their children's education at home. Inspectors endorse these views. A small minority of parents think that the school does not always manage poor behaviour effectively. Inspectors found behaviour and its management in class and around the school to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Little Aston 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	68	34	32	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	75	71	27	26	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	46	54	51	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	54	40	38	5	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	54	41	39	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	54	44	42	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	56	46	44	0	0	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)	57	54	40	38	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	53	50	49	47	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	48	42	40	9	9	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	50	41	39	3	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	61	58	39	37	3	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	65	31	30	4	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

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 pupils' 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.



15 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Aston Primary School, Sutton Coldfield, B74 3BE

Thank you for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and seeing you in lessons and at play. I hope those of you in Year 6 had a successful residential visit to Ironbridge. You are rightly proud of the school's happy atmosphere in which you all get on so well together. Little Aston is a good school. Here are some of the things we found out:

Your teachers ensure that you make good progress in all classes.

You enjoy school and feel very safe and secure.

You try your best to eat a healthy diet and take plenty of exercise.

Your behaviour is good.

You have good relationships with your teachers and you try hard for them.

The curriculum provides you with exciting clubs and visits, which you enjoy.

Adults look after you very well and are always ready to help you.

The headteacher and staff are working hard to make the school get even better.

We have asked the school to do two things to help you do even better in your learning:

Help you to always learn at a fast rate by making sure lesson introductions do not last too long.

Improve the accuracy and speed of your calculations to help you get even better at solving mathematical problems.

You can all help the school by continuing to try your best in lessons, behaving well and attending regularly.

Yours sincerely

Gerald Griffin

Lead inspector

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