

Birchfield Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103321
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376875
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Kathy Hooper

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The registered childcare provision, managed by the governing body, was inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	708
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Cahill
Headteacher	Moira Foster-Brown
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2009
School address	Trinity Road Aston Birmingham B6 6AJ
Telephone number	0121 464 5661
Fax number	0121 464 5294
Email address	enquiry@birchfld.bham.sch.uk

Registered childcare provision	EY332142 Birchfield Pre-School Academy
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	48
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	14 January 2009

Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	14–15 March 2012
Inspection number	376875



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Introduction

Inspection team

Kathy Hooper	Additional inspector
Anthony Green	Additional inspector
Jenny Edginton	Additional inspector
Edgar Hastings	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Nineteen teachers were observed teaching 21 lessons over a period of nearly 10 hours. The inspectors carried out surveys of lessons, spoke to groups of pupils, staff, governors and senior managers. They looked at pupils' work, heard them read, and analysed the school's data on their progress. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's monitoring records, policies and other documents, including the minutes of meetings of the governing body. Inspectors analysed 237 questionnaires from parents and carers, 47 from staff and 150 from pupils.

Information about the school

This is a very large school with a very high proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. All pupils have minority ethnic heritage, from 26 different minority groups, mainly Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. The number of pupils whose first language is not English is much higher than average, and 28 different languages/dialects are spoken. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of other schools nationally. The school meets the current government floor standards for attainment and progress in both English and mathematics. The school has separate provision for children from 2-4 years old in the Pre-School Academy in addition to the Nursery and Reception classes. It has gained a number of awards: Healthy Schools; Quality Mark; Early Effective Learning; Leading Parent Partnership; Arts Mark Silver; Investors in People Leadership Gold; and International Schools Award, Intermediate.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school because pupils make good progress, within an environment that makes excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is not outstanding because pupils' achievement is not as strong in mathematics as it is in English.
- The majority of children achieve their Early Learning Goals in Early Years Foundation Stage giving them a firm basis for their future education. Pupils from all ethnic groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make particularly good progress in English. The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to that of other pupils.
- Pupils persevere well and enjoy school. Teaching is good; teachers have good subject knowledge and manage behaviour well. Occasionally, the amount of time in lessons for pupils to engage with activities for themselves is limited by whole-class discussion and too much focus on those with their hands up. In those lessons, while the majority make satisfactory progress, the individual needs of all pupils are not always fully addressed.
- The school operates within an orderly environment because pupils understand the schools' routines and conventions well. There is an exceptionally warm community ethos. Pupils have a strong moral ethic and respect differences. Attendance has improved. Rare incidents of bullying are sensitively handled. Pupils generally feel safe and understand risks. However, there are limited opportunities in lessons for pupils to question, take the initiative, and take responsibility for events.
- Good leadership provides a clear sense of purpose. Performance management is well used to improve the quality of teaching. However, occasional inconsistencies in practice are not always fully addressed by senior and middle leaders. The curriculum has been developed and enriched through extensive local and international links. The outside play area for the Early Years

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Foundation Stage is limited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of pupils in mathematics by:
 - promptly identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' understanding before moving on to new learning;
 - developing the confidence of girls in numeracy.
- Raise all teaching to that of the best by:
 - ensuring that whole-class teaching is accompanied by appropriate support for individual pupils.
 - ensuring teachers plan questions appropriate for all abilities to extend and check pupils' understanding.
- Develop the monitoring role of middle and senior managers to ensure all teachers follow agreed practice with respect to classroom management.
- Enhance the outdoor play area for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Pre-school Academy.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

From extremely low starting points when they enter school, pupils make good progress to achieve standards comparable with the national average. The vast majority of parents and carers report that their children make good progress. One commented that: 'Staff are always very supportive and we also have a lot of support from the head. I have two older children who left with excellent results and are still doing well.' Pupils achieve particularly well in English and there is little difference in the achievement of those known to be eligible for free school meals compared with others. Teachers and support staff use a good range of interventions and resources to target individuals and groups. As a result, pupils from different ethnic groups, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and recently arrived pupils, achieve as well as others. Nevertheless, progress in mathematics is not as good as that in English, and girls are less confident in this area.

By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the majority of children have achieved their Early Learning Goals. Children in the Nursery often make outstanding progress. More-able children write simple sentences, add numbers up to 10, and order numbers to 35. By the end of Key Stage 1, achievement is good and improving. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is well above that achieved nationally and in writing it is above. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are achieving at levels similar to other pupils nationally due to strong teaching and a rich curriculum. Year 6 high-ability pupils used a range of information and communication technology

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equipment, such as robot cars, to solve problems related to area and perimeter. All were totally engrossed in their work, knew their levels and what they had to do to improve. Pupils read at levels similar to others of the same age by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 because they have good opportunities to read a range of books at home and at school.

Quality of teaching

The best lessons are lively and pupils are very well engaged, particularly in practical problem-solving activities. In English, the use of targets and well-focused feedback through marking helps pupils to understand how to improve. However, in mathematics there are occasions when learning moves on even when pupils have gaps in their understanding. Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide valuable feedback to pupils on their learning. Tasks are generally well tailored to individual needs. The range of ethnicity within the staff enables adults to communicate with pupils in their first language when necessary.

The majority of parents, carers and pupils believe that the teaching is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and often provide exciting activities. The recent introduction of the use of film to promote pupils' literacy is effective and very popular. Pupils' attention was totally gripped while watching a film made by Year 6 girls. Integrated opportunities to learn outside the classroom make the learning relevant and stimulating while powerfully promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' understanding of the focus of lessons is encapsulated in the use of 'class greeters' who explain to visitors what is happening in the lesson; this also develops their confidence in addressing strangers.

Staffing difficulties lead to some inconsistent practice between classes. Occasionally, teachers limit the progress of individuals by over-directing, rather than providing the resources pupils need to complete tasks for themselves. In some whole-class discussions, not all pupils are equally well engaged because teachers do not check their understanding rigorously enough. On such occasions, some pupils' attention wanders.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school's diverse population operates as a strong and enabling community. Pupils are well-motivated by school. Although a small minority of parents and carers do not believe that behaviour in the school is good, the overwhelming majority believe that their children enjoy school and make good progress. Several parents and carers said: 'Teachers want the best for all children and make the environment a friendly one, where children feel secure. They enjoy school so much they want to go to school even when they are ill.' There is a well-understood system of rewards to encourage good behaviour and to ensure that all pupils know the rules and expectations.

Learning mentors support those pupils who have the greatest difficulties in controlling their behaviour. Pupils have high levels of understanding of different kinds

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of bullying and report that bullying is rare and promptly addressed. Any cyber bullying is picked up through a sophisticated school system for monitoring. Parents and pupils believe the safety of pupils is given the highest priority. Pupils have high levels of understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe and know how to avoid unsafe situations. Younger pupils say that they sometimes do not feel comfortable in the playground before and after school when there are large numbers of older pupils and adults around.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management, supported by a well-informed governing body, are good and ensure continuous improvement in pupils' achievement, teaching and the curriculum. As a result, standards show an upward trend. Governors have a good range of experience, a high profile within the school, and an accurate view of the school's achievements and successes. Professional development has been effective in promoting good practice throughout the governing body and the staff. Staff confirm the good leadership and management.

Systems for monitoring are strong and evaluations of performance are accurate. There is a coherent approach to monitoring different aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring collaborative planning and evaluation of outcomes. There is high morale among the staff and a tangible drive to improve pupils' achievement. However, the pursuit of excellence is compromised by inconsistencies in practice that are not addressed quickly enough through monitoring by senior and middle leaders. The curriculum provides memorable experiences for pupils, putting their learning into context and promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is acknowledged by parents and carers, one saying: 'Both of my daughters never want to stay home and enjoy every aspect of the school day from assembly, play, lessons, dinner, physical education, swimming etc.'

The system for monitoring pupils' progress enables staff to identify and promptly address any underperformance. As a result, gaps between different groups of pupils, those known to be eligible for free school meals, boys and girls, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are diminishing. Safeguarding arrangements meet the government's current requirements. The high quality of safeguarding procedures is founded on detailed oversight of each pupil's particular circumstances and is acknowledged by parents and carers and their children. The school is well supported by pupils' families. The website is excellent and parents have frequent opportunities to engage in family workshops and communicate with staff. The school has been instrumental in enabling families to have access to information and communication technology in all the pupils' homes. The school has a good capacity to improve.

The Early Years Foundation Stage delivered in the registered childcare provision

The Pre-school Academy operates as a separate provision, managed by the governors, for children aged two to four years old. Children’s attainment on entry is very low and many speak little English. Children’s starting points are rigorously assessed and they make good progress by the time they transfer either to Reception or to another school. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported by outside agencies. Parents and carers are generally pleased with their children’s progress. Children establish good relationships with all adults and respond well to them, sharing with them in their play. Children learn to cooperate well with each other and with adults, and to work independently. Three children interacted well while playing in a ‘shop’, writing out bills, using the till, and stocking the cupboards. Children’s literacy, numeracy and social skills develop well because adults consistently reinforce their skills throughout all activities.

Adults working with children are knowledgeable and have skilfully created a stimulating learning environment despite the constraints imposed by the building. They provide a well-considered range of activities that effectively engage children in both group and individual activities. Nevertheless, the outdoor area lacks stimulation. Children’s progress is well monitored through observations, and used to plan appropriate activities.

Leadership and management ensure close cooperation with the Nursery and Reception staff to provide consistently good provision. Heritage language is effectively used to guide and support children. Self-evaluation is well used to ensure continuous improvement in provision. Safety and security are given high priority. There are good relationships with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage of the registered childcare provision, inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006

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 for the registered provision	2

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birchfield Community School, Birmingham, B6 6AJ

Thank you so much for a very enjoyable visit to your school last week. We were very interested to talk to you about your school, to see your lessons, to listen to you reading, and to look at your work.

Yours is a good school because progress in the school is good, especially in reading and writing. We were delighted to see some of you are helping younger children by listening to them read. We agree with you that you learn a lot in lessons. We were so pleased to see your respectful attention during the film that had been made by the Year 6 pupils. We really enjoyed hearing about the work you do out of school that puts learning in mathematics, science, personal, social and health education into a real life context. You are becoming mature and sociable young people through better understanding of yourselves and others. You are polite, well-behaved, and learning to keep yourselves and others safe. Your school is a strong multi-cultural community that helps you to value differences and respect the needs of others.

All the good things about your school are because of the energy and imagination of the headteacher and the great care and commitment of all the staff in the school. In order to make your school even better, I have asked your teachers to do the following.

- Help you achieve as well in mathematics as you do in English.
- Give you as much time as possible in lessons to work on activities that you can do yourselves, and to check your understanding more frequently.
- Ensure that all staff have the same high expectations of your learning and your behaviour.
- Make the outdoor space for the Early Years Foundation Stage children more exciting.

You can help your teachers by asking questions in lessons and telling your teacher when you do not understand, particularly in mathematics.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Hooper
Lead inspector

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