

# Birches Green Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103169
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	376838
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carolyn Carnaghan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	235
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Marcia Squire-Wood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Ricketts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	09 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Birches Green Road Erdington Birmingham B24 9SR
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons taught by 11 teachers and held meetings with pupils, teachers and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies, documents, records of meetings and analysis of its activities, including arrangements for safeguarding. The inspection also reviewed 68 responses to questionnaires received from parents and carers and those returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What evidence is there to confirm the school's view of above average attainment and good progress?
- How well does the school promote achievement for minority ethnic groups?
- Does teaching have the consistency to promote strong progress for all groups of pupils?

## Information about the school

This is an average-size infant school with attached Nursery and Reception classes and a privately managed before- and after-school club. There are much higher than average proportions of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and who have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is also larger than average and the majority of these pupils are of Pakistani origin. There is a greater than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/disabilities, the majority of whom have speech, language and communication needs. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold Award.

**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

Birches Green is a good school. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with lower levels of skills than those expected for their age. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception classes and this continues through Years 1 and 2. They leave the school having reached average attainment and have made good progress and achievement. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and from minority ethnic groups also make good progress because the provision they receive is highly supportive and tailored for their needs by the teaching and learning support assistant team.

Pupils enjoy learning in a positive and creative environment where individuals are encouraged to serve their school, support and care for one another. Their personal development is outstanding. Great emphasis is placed on respect and tolerance and all pupils have outstanding opportunities to learn about and appreciate their own culturally diverse community and those of the world around them. As a result, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

The school ensures that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities have the same chances as others to engage with the vibrant curriculum, both in lessons and through the extensive enrichment programme. Teachers deliver wide-ranging opportunities to use initiative, organise activities and develop skills that will serve pupils well in future life. However, lessons do not always stretch the most able and their pace and challenge is not fully consistent. Pupils' attendance is above average because the school keeps in close communication with parents and carers, often inviting them in so they can gauge how well their children are doing. There is plenty of help on hand and outstanding care and guidance from staff enables parents and carers to understand how they can help their children with homework.

The school ensures its pupils benefit from an excellent range of partners that help build a vibrant curriculum and provide support for pupils and their families when needed. The school's activities, including teaching, are carefully evaluated for their impact on pupils' learning and development. The headteacher and her senior team monitor and analyse every undertaking and this has resulted in an improving picture of progress for all. This means the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement. Members of the governing body are highly supportive, holding the school to account for pupils' outcomes, though not always consistently challenging leaders and managers about its key areas for development. They ensure the school provides a safe environment and that it continues to be a positive member of its local

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community.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by September 2012 by ensuring that:
  - lessons always provide sufficient pace and challenge and so accelerate progress
  - all activities stretch the more able at every stage of the lesson.
- Ensure that members of the governing body further develop their understanding of the school's main areas for improvement and so hold it more consistently to account.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Pupils make good progress and achievement in Years 1 and 2, leaving with attainment that is average. Their personal development is outstanding because the school encourages pupils to become independent, to take care of each other through becoming buddies, for example, and by stimulating their interests both inside and outside the classroom.

Pupils in Year 1 are gradually introduced to the work of Key Stage 1, learning to apply their skills in literacy and numeracy to real life contexts and through encouragement to take an interest in the world. They develop their skills through the careful weaving of opportunities across all areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils really enjoy using role-play to come up with interesting ideas for exploration; or they might take a scene or character from a film to start off a written story of their own. This has supported improvements, particularly in boys' writing skills. Pupils enjoy reading, taking home books so that parents and carers can support from home. Opportunities to use writing across the curriculum are keenly pursued because the school has been determined to raise attainment in this vital skill.

The highly imaginative curriculum provides ways of developing numeracy, for instance by measuring some runner beans that have been grown in the school allotment. Pupils enjoy learning and using a modern foreign language and many make very good progress in the creative subjects. Opportunities to explore different cultures, often represented among the pupils in the school, are pursued through music, drama and art. Many pupils go to dance club where non-western forms are investigated towards performances for parents, carers and members of the local community. Every class enjoys performance opportunities, such as when Year 2 demonstrated their Irish dance skills. Beautiful art works by pupils adorn the walls around the school, ranging from paintings to sculptures and models.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour ensures they move around the school and in lessons sensibly and carefully. They are trusted and respond by taking responsibility for helping out as buddies and as members of the school council. There is genuine

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interest shown in healthy living. Pupils enjoy exploring the tastes of food from different cultures. They recently celebrated 'Black History' month with some exploration of Caribbean food, helped along by the school's own catering staff.

The considerable sporting prowess of pupils at Birches Green is renowned locally because sports coaching and clubs supplement the excellent achievement made in physical education in school. The school holds a number of trophies for sport.

The confidence displayed in assembly by a class re-enacting the day when Rosa Parks refused to move from her seat on the bus was testament to their maturity and personal development. This has all helped to develop real confidence in the pupils who are happy to express their thoughts and opinions with considerable maturity.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Lessons are generally well planned and taught. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' needs and abilities through regular assessments, the results of which are used effectively to ensure work is appropriate. The best lessons are fast paced, pupils are able to move from one activity to another without having to wait for others. Learning support assistants are well deployed, often moving seamlessly between pupils, providing high quality guidance where needed. Less-successful lessons are characterised by too long spent on opening activities, tasks that are too general and not focused sufficiently on the needs of individuals. More-able pupils are sometimes held back because they have to wait while others catch up.

<sup>1</sup> 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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The creative use of role-play and drama techniques is exemplary and pupils use these to explore topics and themes. These are then developed into ideas for writing and further work. The results of this undertaking, along with assessments, are used to inform future planning by staff. Targets are set and these are clearly understood by staff and pupils alike.

The curriculum provides the backbone for progress and its creative use of themes as the basis for learning means pupils have plenty of opportunities to hone their key skills. As a result, the school has achieved the Artsmark Gold Award. The sciences are explored, for example via a forest school and allotment, and pupils learn to identify plants and insects, animals and birds. Their curiosity is often sparked when teachers encourage observation, such as when the vegetable plot was being cleared for autumn by a Year 2 group and some interesting insect eggs were spotted. Teachers have worked hard to develop a wide-ranging curriculum that has helped build genuine enjoyment into lessons.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Parents and carers are regularly invited into school for 'Inspire' sessions, which help them understand how well their children are doing. The school has excellent systems in place to enable smooth transitions between Reception and the main school and then on to the next phase. The environment is extremely safe and well managed and very good work with outside agencies ensures potentially vulnerable pupils are very well cared for. Attendance is above average because the school has worked hard to support families to ensure they bring their children every day. The clear expectations for excellent conduct mean poor behaviour is extremely rare.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The leadership team works very closely with staff to provide a harmonious environment where children can thrive. Lessons are regularly monitored and teachers supported to raise the level of their own practice. The headteacher has galvanised enthusiasm from her staff and her tenacious attitude to monitoring and evaluating the school's work pays off. The senior team pursues new strategies, for example to help those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure the school remains comprehensively inclusive, and then it rigorously evaluates the effects of the activity. The new curriculum uses some innovative ways of inspiring boys'

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achievement, sometimes through the forest school, and helps ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of need.

The governing body is a visible presence in school and it has a good understanding of the school’s priorities, although its members do not always prioritise their focus as effectively as they might. However, members are extremely supportive of the pupils and their families, helping the school to impact strongly on its local community. They ensure the school is extremely safe; all safeguarding policies are in place and regularly monitored and staff are all carefully vetted. The governing body fully represents the cultural diversity of the pupils and its undoubted expertise clearly has a positive influence on the school’s work.

Parents and carers involve themselves with the school and there are open channels of communication. The broad range of partners with which the school engages help to build variety and challenge into the curriculum. Pupils have the chance to make a difference to the lives of others through charity fund raising, such as by making and selling biscuits, and through competing successfully in competitions. There are links with many other schools that enable both staff and pupils to broaden their educational experiences.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children arrive in Nursery with lower skill levels than expected and make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Where staff use a variety of resources that are well-matched to children’s needs to engage and stimulate and they assess progress regularly, ensuring children move on to new challenges quickly, learning is good. Occasionally, less successful learning happens when children spend too long

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working in large groups, having to wait for others to catch up.

The provision makes for a good curriculum that is well balanced and capitalises on children’s imagination and curiosity. It might be centred around a pumpkin for Halloween, for example, or following through a study about leprechauns- that stimulated some lively discussions. Children are inspired to be creative, such as by making pompon animals for a charity sale. Transitions into and out of the Early Years are very well handled and close liaison with parents and carers ensures children settle quickly. The good management of behaviour builds a calm environment.

Good leadership and management create an effective team to assess children’s progress, plan activities to match their interests and to ensure continuity across the phase. Provision in the Nursery is in advance of Reception in the variety of activities, pace and the engagement of the children because staff match what they do more effectively to the needs of each child. Sometimes sessions in Reception go on too long and children’s concentration becomes over-stretched. This is rare, however, and children are generally happy, extremely well cared for and kept very safely in this exciting and creative environment.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

The vast majority of responses show parents and carers are very happy with their children’s progress and think that teaching is good. A few stated that they either did not know how well their child was doing, or were not informed about their progress. Some also stated that their child was new at school and it was too early to say. Inspectors found that children’s progress is good and that there are numerous opportunities during the year for parents and carers to come into school, such as the ‘Inspire’ workshops, to enable them to experience how well their child is learning.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birches Green Infant 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	84	10	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	81	12	18	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	46	68	20	29	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	65	22	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	78	14	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	48	71	17	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	66	20	29	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)	39	57	19	28	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	44	65	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	60	22	32	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	60	20	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	76	14	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	54	79	13	19	0	0	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



20 October 2011

Dear Pupils,

**Inspection of Birches Green Infant School, Birmingham, B24 9SR**

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you in lessons and meeting so many of you. We particularly liked how you came and found us when you had something to share or tell us. We thought you were very confident and friendly and were having a lot of fun in your learning.

We found that your school provides you with a good education and that you are learning your writing and reading skills well, finding out about the world and its communities and that you are particularly good at exploring the arts and sciences in your lessons. You behave very well and care for each other. You are very good at helping others and at sports too. Well done!

We have asked your teachers and governing body to do a few things to make your school even better, these are to:

- raise your attainment by making sure every lesson has good pace and provides lots of activities to really stretch you all
- make sure the governing body helps the school even more by always challenging them to do better.

You can help by always working as hard as you can in every lesson.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Carnaghan  
Lead Inspector

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