



Bells Farm Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103383
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 276905
Inspection dates 20 September 2005 to 21 September 2005
Reporting inspector Christopher Kessell RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Brockworth Road
School category	Community		Druids Heath
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Birmingham, West Midlands B14 5YG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4598666
Number on roll	166	Fax number	0121 4598666
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr R Lovegrove
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr David Christie

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Bells Farm Junior and Infant School is smaller than the average primary school and serves a community with high levels of social deprivation. The children start school with levels of attainment that are below those normally found at that age. An above average proportion of pupils (42%) are entitled to free school meals. The school roll has fallen since the last inspection and the proportion of pupils leaving and joining the school during the school year is quite high. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds but about 10% of pupils are from mixed White and Black Caribbean or Black British—Caribbean backgrounds. Twenty-nine pupils (22%) are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities and this proportion is about average. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school is a member of the Kings Norton Excellence in Cities Education Action Zone (EAZ).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bells Farm Junior and Infant School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Although many pupils make good progress as they move through the school, a small number do not make the progress they are capable of. This is the result of weaknesses in some of the teaching and the school's assessment of its pupils. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy coming to school and are positive about their learning. Children get a good start in the Reception Year and make good progress as a result of good teaching. The school works well with parents and local groups, such as the EAZ. These relationships have contributed effectively to improving standards, behaviour and attendance.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate, but some longstanding areas for development have not been addressed quickly enough. Improvement since the previous inspection has been only satisfactory, despite improving standards over the last few years.

With a strong senior management team now in place, the school has a good capacity to improve. Currently, it offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the consistency of teaching to enable all pupils to learn effectively and make the progress of which they are capable;
- continue to improve the school's provision for ICT;
- ensure that the new assessment procedures are used consistently by all teachers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children join the school's Reception Class with standards that are often well below the expected levels. There are weaknesses in the children's language and communication skills and their personal development. As a result of the good provision in Reception, the children achieve well. They enjoy their learning and are cared for well. By the time they reach Year 1, the vast majority have made good progress in relation to their starting points and are on the way to reaching levels of attainment expected for their age. Their personal development is particularly well promoted. Through Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make good progress and standards are broadly average by the time they enter Year 3. However, over the last few years, the pupils' standards in writing have not been as high as those in reading and mathematics.

By the time pupils reach Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. The vast majority of children make good progress from Year 3. However, a very small number of more able pupils underachieve and do not always make the progress they are capable of. Their realistic targets for learning are not always met

and some could do better. Standards by the end of school have been steadily improving in mathematics and science since 2002. Results in English have been more inconsistent. Standards in 2005 improved significantly on the previous year in all subjects.

There has been some variation in progress between different groups of learners. For example, in 2004, White British pupils performed better than other ethnic groups. These differences were remedied in 2005.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good. They develop good social skills and good understanding of moral issues. The school has improved its approach to developing the cultural understanding of its pupils since the previous inspection. Overall, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.

The school emphasises positive behaviour, which helps pupils demonstrate respect for themselves, others and the environment. The school is a calm environment and pupils feel happy. Most spoke enthusiastically about their school – ‘It’s the best’ said one young boy. Most pupils enjoy learning, knowing that their classrooms are safe environments.

Attendance, punctuality and behaviour have all improved through strategies introduced since the previous inspection. Behaviour is now good, levels of attendance are better and pupils arrive on time. The good work of the school’s learning mentor has supported many of these improvements. He supports a number of children with social and personal difficulties and enables them to make better progress.

The school has a healthy eating policy and it offers a healthy option for lunch. However, the pupils are not yet consistently choosing these meals despite having a sound understanding of what contributes to a healthy lifestyle. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for active play through the ‘Zoneparc’ playground project. Extra-curricular sport is available at lunchtime and after school for more organised physical activity. The number of pupils attending these activities is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community, for example by the organisation of charity events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Although much of the teaching in the school is good, there are weaknesses which slow pupils’ progress and inhibit their enjoyment of learning. Where teaching is good, lessons have quick pace, they are exciting and the pupils enjoy what they are doing. Pupils are given work that is appropriate to their ability and they are able to learn at a good rate. They are enthusiastic about their activities and often work well independently. In good lessons,

teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.

Where teaching is less effective, lessons are not so exciting and activities are not accurately matched to pupils' needs. During the inspection, a small minority of pupils complained that 'work was too hard' or they 'did not understand what to do'. This was the result of being given inappropriate work in relation to their abilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have clear targets in their individual education plans. However, not all teachers pay sufficient attention to these targets when planning their work. Sometimes these pupils are given work that is not suitable for them.

The school has new assessment procedures but they are not yet fully embedded into school practice. Consequently, some teachers do not use assessment information to inform their planning and set appropriate targets for their pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum that fulfils statutory requirements and generally serves the needs of the pupils. Many of the experiences offered to the pupils inside and outside the classroom are interesting and exciting. Good attention is paid to the pupils' personal, social and health education. Successful initiatives are used to encourage pupils to become healthy and safe. The oldest pupils, for example, undertake a first-aid course so that they are able to help themselves and others. Regular physical activity is encouraged through the 'Zoneparc' playground project and the good opportunities pupils have in physical education. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is still a weaker element of the curriculum, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Its development as a subject has been unsatisfactory.

The school enriches the curriculum well with a wide range of initiatives such as the breakfast club, educational visits and language enrichment activities. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about last year's residential visit and the day spent 'being Victorians'. The good extra-curricular programme offers the pupils opportunities to develop knowledge and skills further through popular lunchtime and after-school activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are good systems to ensure that pupils work in a safe environment. All pupils feel safe and look after one another well. Parents share this view. When some older pupils were asked what they liked most about the school, their response was unanimous – the teachers – 'they care for us and help with our problems'.

Pupils are given a strong voice through the influential school council. For example, school council members hold a regular 'surgery', which enables other pupils to share any issues related to bullying. Pupils value this responsibility and talk positively about their part in decision-making within the school.

Pupils enjoy and value their good personal development programme, which is taught throughout the curriculum. Parents are provided with good opportunities to become involved in their children's learning. The parent partnership worker contributes well to this process, offering effective support to parents and providing and promoting community education courses.

The guidance for pupils about their academic work is often weak. Pupils are confused by the targets they are given for literacy and numeracy because they have not been explained clearly and a small minority of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given insufficient support by their class teachers. However, the school's learning mentor provides high quality guidance for pupils with emotional and behavioural problems.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is accurate but since the previous inspection some issues, like weaknesses in teaching and learning and the ICT provision, have not been dealt with quickly enough. This has prevented some pupils achieving as well as they should and targets for learning are not always met. There are appropriate procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating performance but strategies for improvement are not always effective. The headteacher has established good links with outside organisations, such as the EAZ and Baverstock School and Sports College, and this has benefited the school by providing additional resources and staffing. As a result, there have been improvements in pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance. He has also taken steps to tackle the school's falling roll by developing good links with early years providers and applying to establish and manage a new children's centre on the school site.

The headteacher is very well supported by the deputy headteacher who has been at the school for about a year. She has a good understanding of the issues facing primary education. Since her appointment, she has promoted the need for continuous improvement and has introduced new systems and processes, such as arrangements for assessment that will bring a greater consistency to what the school does. The school is now better placed to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they possibly can.

Teaching resources are generally deployed well with the intention of raising pupils' achievement and providing value for money. For example, teachers' particular strengths are directed to where they can do the most good. Over the last few years, there has been a drive by the school and governors to improve the school's environment but the progress in developing ICT resources since the previous inspection has been slow. Governors provide satisfactory support. They ensure that the school meets its legal requirements and understand that they should question and challenge what the school does. They are well informed about what happens in the school but their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is not effective. Consequently, some important issues have been dealt with too slowly.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed watching you learn, talking to you about your work and the school and sharing Mr Christie's assembly about the guinea pigs with you!

What we like most about your school:

you are well behaved and enjoy the activities provided by the teachers;

most of you learn well and make good progress as you move through the school;

you are well cared for by all of the staff;

many of the lessons you have are good. They are exciting and well planned by your teachers;

there are good opportunities for your mums and dads to become involved with the school;

the school is in a good position to become even better.

What we have asked your school to do now:

improve some of the lessons so that they are all good;

make sure that all of you learn as well as you can;

give you more opportunities to use computers;

keep an eye on everyone's progress so that no one gets left behind with their work.