

Gunter Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103208
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308251
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Harris
Headteacher	Matthew Poyser
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Gunter Road Erdington Birmingham B24 0RU
Telephone number	01214 642367
Fax number	01213 828015

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average school. A broadly average percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and a very small number are in the early stages of learning English. The main additional language is Polish. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, though falling, and attainment on entry, which was until recently well below average, is now broadly average because of new housing developments in the school locality.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school. Standards are broadly average and achievement is good, and improving. There are variations in standards reached by pupils between year groups but overall they are rising, now that staffing is more settled after a period of many changes. In Years 1 and 2, standards have risen dramatically after falling for several years. Achievement is good in all subjects, especially in literacy, though it is slightly less so in mathematics, where teachers' confidence and expertise in teaching numeracy is not quite so good as in other subjects.

Improvements are driven by the determination of the headteacher, in particular, but also the senior staff. The school has a clear understanding of what its strengths and weaknesses are and, based on progress already made in literacy, achievement, attendance and teaching, it is well placed to sustain its improvement. Having rightly prioritised literacy, it is now turning its attention to improving achievement in mathematics, but still has some way to go. Parents recognise this as a 'good school', where 'staff are approachable and friendly' and where children 'come on in leaps and bounds.'

Lessons are well planned and teachers make increasingly effective use of assessment information to make sure work meets the needs of all pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good with occasionally excellent questioning that makes pupils think about and explain their work accurately. Marking is good, giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve. Teachers set academic targets and pupils know what these are, and are aware of what they need to do to reach them, especially in literacy. The curriculum is mostly well matched to meet pupils' needs, though it lacks enough opportunities to consolidate earlier work covered in mathematics. The range of activities to enliven the curriculum is good and the wide range of out-of-school clubs, music and drama activities is well supported.

Pupils are confident and happy. The great majority of pupils attend regularly and attendance has improved. A small minority are away too often, despite strenuous efforts to impress on parents the importance of regular attendance. Increasingly, pupils eat healthily and take part in physical exercise. They are keen to take on responsibilities in school and are satisfactorily involved in wider community activities. They are considerate towards each other and have a good grasp of the values and cultures of the different people in Britain today. In general, pupils feel safe and know that any bullying or racist incidents are resolved, provided they tell someone. The school takes good care of its pupils and makes sure that the school is safe and secure, responding to parents' concerns where necessary.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory and improving. There are effective partnerships with homes that help children settle in quickly to the Nursery and, for example, fathers are increasingly involved through the 'Superdad' project. Children make satisfactory progress, reaching average levels of skills by the end of Reception. Their progress in developing social skills is good, and it is satisfactory in most other areas. Least progress is made in writing and opportunities are sometimes missed to develop listening and speaking skills. Occasionally, the most able children do not make quite as much progress as they should, because activities provide insufficient challenge. A new assessment system is starting to help staff plan work to meet children's needs,

but it is in its early stages. There is a good balance between activities chosen by teachers and those by children, which helps children develop independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement in mathematics by ensuring all teachers have the confidence and necessary subject expertise for teaching numeracy.
- Ensure all children in the Foundation Stage have more challenging work and increased opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills to raise their attainment further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in Years 2 and 6 are average and, although there are variations between other years, standards are generally rising. Pupils achieve well and achievement is improving. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement has been good for several years and, given their low starting points, current average standards reached represent good progress. The focus on improving literacy has been effective and pupils' achievement is best here. Pupils are confident to speak, have a wide vocabulary and explain their understanding accurately. They write confidently. Pupils make good progress in science and developing information and communication technology skills. Achievement is a little slower in mathematics because pupils do not consistently remember work they have done previously. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly good progress, due to clear identification of their needs and effective support from teachers and classroom assistants. The small number of pupils in the early stages of learning English make good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress, and good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Some of the most able children do not achieve as well as they could because activities are not always challenging enough.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and pupils have a keen awareness of the faiths and cultures in Britain today. This ensures that pupils enjoy school and their positive attitudes support their good progress. As one pupil correctly remarked, 'As well as learning, lessons are fun.' As a result, most pupils enjoy attending. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, shown through their increasingly healthy eating habits and enjoyment of regular exercise. Pupils feel safe and most know they can tell someone of their worries. They make a good contribution to the school community and take their responsibilities, such as peer mediators and librarians, seriously. Pupils' contribution to the wider community and understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens is more limited. However, they are aware of environmental issues. For example, older pupils collect left over fruit for composting. Good achievement in their academic and social skills prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' planning is thorough, and they use detailed assessment information effectively to ensure work is tailored to pupils' abilities. However, in the Foundation Stage, work does not

consistently meet children's needs, with some missed opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening skills. Teaching is mostly challenging and questioning is sometimes outstanding, pushing pupils to explain at length, to use correct and alternative vocabulary, all of which leads to good learning. Teachers establish very good relationships and manage pupils' behaviour well. Marking is usually good, giving clear direction on how to improve and opportunities for pupils to discuss this with teachers. Subject knowledge is good, especially in literacy, and has a good impact on how well teachers plan lessons. In numeracy, teachers often lack confidence and expertise and this slows pupils' learning compared with other subjects. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English is good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The mathematics curriculum has improved, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to regularly revisit and reinforce their learning. Enrichment activities, such as regular 'focus weeks' catch pupils' imagination and make a good contribution to pupils' understanding and appreciation of the diverse society in which they live. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sporting activities, clubs, dance and drama, makes a good contribution to pupils' physical well-being and to their social and cultural development. Few of them will forget the surprise performance of the headteacher as the 'fairy grandmama' in the children's production of Cinderella!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good systems are in place to ensure pupils' health, safety and welfare. The school has responded well to parental concerns about children's safety by making the school grounds more secure. A small number of pupils receive effective help in learning how to manage their emotions and behaviour better. Attendance has improved to broadly average because of rigorous action taken by the school, particularly through effective partnerships with other agencies. The school stresses the importance of regular attendance to families, but there are still some persistent absentees. Academic guidance is good. Improved assessment means pupils' progress is regularly checked, enabling the school to intervene quickly to support pupils when they fall behind in their work. Pupils know their targets and how to achieve them, especially in literacy, but this is less effective in mathematics.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides very good direction for the school's improvement and he is well supported by other staff. Leaders at all levels have a good grasp of what the school needs to do to improve, based on accurate evaluation of the school's performance. Planning for improvement is clear and well organised. There have already been significant improvements in achievement in Years 3 to 6, literacy, teaching and attendance. Improvements have begun to take effect in the Foundation Stage, but are at a very early stage in improving the teaching of numeracy. Nevertheless, the capacity for further improvement is good. The school has successfully dealt with the issues from the previous inspection, such as raising standards in

Year 6 and improving assessment. Governors are very supportive and help drive forward improvements effectively. Their expectations for improvement of pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 have been instrumental in helping the school improve achievement in this area.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Gunter Primary School, Erdington, Birmingham, B24 0RU

Thank you for making us feel part of your school for the time we were there. We spoke to many of you in meetings and around school, and you told us a lot about what your school is like and how much you like it. You really helped us.

- These are the main things we found out about your school.
- You are at a good and improving school where teaching is good and you make good progress.
- The headteacher and other staff know what else the school needs to do and are working hard to make sure it improves even more.
- You enjoy school and behave well. While a few of you do not attend well enough, most of you do and attendance is improving.
- You treat each other well and behave safely.
- You take on responsibilities willingly in school and carry them out well.
- Most of you know about the importance of healthy lifestyles and eat healthily, and take part in physical exercise. You also enjoy the wide range of out-of-lesson activities the school arranges.

Here are the things we have asked the school to do to improve further.

- Help you do better at numeracy by making sure you are taught as well in this subject as you are in others.
- Improve how well children make progress in the Nursery and Reception class, especially the most able children, by making sure work is hard enough and that there are lots of opportunities to speak and listen.

You can help by making sure that you attend regularly, and to tell an adult if you are worried about the way anyone treats you.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley Lead inspector

Annex B

18 April 2008



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Ted Wheatley
Lead inspector