

Old Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103909
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	308450
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	492
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	77
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Care
Headteacher	Liz Adams
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Old Park Road Wednesbury WS10 9LX
Telephone number	01215 262669
Fax number	01215 262669

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Old Park Primary School is a much larger than average primary school. There is Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in Nursery and Reception classes. The school has recently opened the North Wednesbury Children's Centre on site, which it manages. At present 26 children, aged from two to five years old, attend the centre, almost all part time. The centre was inspected during this visit. The school has undergone a period of expansion since 2005 increasing to two-form entry. This has raised the number of pupils who come from an area of high social and economic disadvantage to a level well above the national average. The proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Old Park Primary School is an outstanding school. It is a shining light at the centre of a community, where all are welcomed to a caring, vibrant and happy environment. A governor rightly commented, 'The school is a haven, a sanctuary for its families.' It is staffed by people who want to give the highest quality of care and education to their pupils, and also give support and guidance to families, in a community with significant needs. The school's contribution to local community cohesion and its commitment to inclusivity are exemplary. Parents know and appreciate what the school provides for their children. Their comments almost unanimously praise the outstanding quality of education. Many say their oldest children have done very well in their continuing education because of the grounding this school has given them. One mother said touchingly, 'When I hear my daughter tell me what she has done every day, I wish I was a child again.' The children's centre is an excellent addition to the school's provision. It is very well managed, children are safe and happy in their learning, and it is already proving to be an excellent resource for the whole community.

Pupils have tremendous eagerness to learn, are proud of their achievements and work very well together. In addition, they are unfailingly polite and cheerful, and are splendid ambassadors for the school. They feel extremely safe, fully understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and eagerly accept every opportunity to be involved in taking responsibility, which prepares them well for their future lives. Attendance is above average, indicating pupils' huge enjoyment of school. They reach above average standards when they leave in Year 6, especially in reading, information and communication technology (ICT), and science. Standards in writing are not as good as in other subjects, though improvement was seen in writing in all year groups during the inspection. Part of the reason is that there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills and writing tasks are not always matched well to the individual needs of pupils.

In the national tests in Year 6 in 2008, almost all pupils reached or exceeded their challenging targets. This shows that they achieve well. Pupils' good progress is because teaching is consistent across the school, being mostly good and occasionally outstanding. The development of a theme-and skills-based curriculum is good and, through strong links with ICT, shows great promise. This good progress starts in EYFS, which is an outstanding provision for children. Exceptionally well resourced and led, in an excellent setting, it gives a fine start to children's development.

The most significant strength of the school is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. She has created an immensely effective management structure headed by an excellent senior management team. It shares her vision that the school is about providing for the needs of the whole child, their families and the local community. The governors are excellent equal partners. They are experienced and make an outstanding contribution to the management of the school. There has been excellent progress since the last inspection, indicating an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children thrive because of the excellent provision. They settle quickly because of high quality care and support, and rapidly develop an appetite for learning and an understanding of how

to behave well. Many parents comment how happy their children are and how well they are doing. Children start school at low levels of skills and knowledge, and make outstanding progress to almost reach average levels in nearly all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. This is because of high quality teaching and carefully planned stimulating activities, which spark children's curiosity. Independent learning skills are thoughtfully developed through a careful balance of activities led by an adult and those children choose for themselves. Extremely knowledgeable, skilful teachers and teaching assistants plan creatively together to ensure that all children progress outstandingly well.

Outdoor provision is a strength of EYFS, providing the space and equipment for children to take measured risks in a well-supervised environment. Themes make excellent use of real-life situations in order to capture children's imaginations. This was well illustrated in the hairdresser's shop where children busily made appointments and created hairstyles. The EYFS is extremely well led and managed. Assessment procedures are rigorous and used well to plan children's next steps in learning. Welfare procedures are securely in place and result in children who feel happy and safe as they learn. A strong emphasis on supporting children's social and emotional needs is a significant factor in children's outstanding progress.

As well as providing excellent before-and after-school care, the children's centre ensures younger children thoroughly enjoy their first taste of learning. Although only just opened, it is already offering excellent childcare in a stimulating, colourful and very well resourced environment. The management is very effective, staff are well qualified and ensure children are happy and safe.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by providing more stimulating writing opportunities across the curriculum, matched to the identified needs and interests of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average overall. Standards in science and reading are especially strong, and there has been a significant increase in the numbers of pupils reaching higher levels in reading, science and mathematics. In 2008, pupils did not do so well in writing, where standards were below average in spite of considerable effort by the school for some time to improve this. However, inspection evidence points clearly to higher standards throughout Key Stage 2 in writing now. The school is rightly exploring further strategies in order to sustain the recent improvement and enable pupils to reach the standards attained in other areas of the curriculum.

The achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with English as an additional language, is good. The school has successfully improved the learning of higher attainers, particularly in Key Stage 2, because of effective monitoring, robust assessment and tracking, and much greater challenge in pupils' learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their time in school because they find learning 'exciting and fun'. Pupils thrive in the school's inclusive atmosphere. By Year 6, pupils have grown into articulate and responsible young people with a strong sense of fair play. They work and play collaboratively,

becoming confident and self-reliant individuals, extremely well prepared for their future lives. Pupils say they are very happy at this school and feel highly valued by the teaching and support staff. They know to whom they can turn should the need arise. Pupils welcome the many opportunities provided to enhance their personal development by, for example, helping to run the fruit tuck shop or training to be one of the school's peer mentors. Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and are proud of helping to organise events, such as the Halloween disco. One pupil, asked if anything was wrong in school, said 'The days are too short!' Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are exemplary. They participate enthusiastically in sport and physical education and are developing healthy lifestyles. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, as observed in a 'caring and sharing' assembly celebrating pupils' achievements. The multicultural development of pupils has significantly improved through a growing understanding of world faiths.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers deliver effective lessons, which not only lead to good learning, but help to foster outstanding attitudes and behaviour in classes. In the best lessons, tasks closely match pupils' needs and abilities. Peer assessment, searching questioning techniques and the use of ICT-based assessment are all effective, for example in pupils' use of 'Activevote', indicating their understanding of objectives for learning. The enthusiasm and energy of teachers and support staff help to make lessons fun and ensure a good pace. Positive relationships between adults and children are characterised by mutual respect, humour and warmth. Teaching in some classes provides useful opportunities to develop writing in subjects across the curriculum as well as in literacy, for example, Year 5 pupils wrote about a mathematical measuring activity, but this is not consistent. In the majority of classes, work is marked consistently, with ideas for future learning included. This is especially evident in the 'Big Write' books, which are used effectively.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The staff and governors have developed an interactive, engaging skills-based curriculum that provides interesting and enjoyable learning opportunities. In particular, the work on supporting pupils' self-esteem and raising their self-confidence and celebrating successes, embedded through the curriculum, has had a significant impact on the personal development and well-being of the pupils. As a result of this initiative, links between subjects are good and help pupils to see the importance of different parts of their work. Pupils, including children in the EYFS, use the large number of computers as natural tools to produce work. A wide range of visits and visitors, and many extra-curricular activities, for example well over 20 school clubs, further enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff know the pupils extremely well and have established very positive relationships with them and their families. The school works vigorously to meet the needs of all pupils, especially those with English as an additional language, those who find learning more challenging, or those who face other difficulties. The health and safety of all pupils are paramount and all necessary child

protection and safeguarding requirements are robust. Staff describe the school as 'one big family'. Adults are proactive in helping pupils to discuss worries and concerns, links with support agencies are strong and pastoral provision is outstanding. The consistent approach by all staff results in pupils' exemplary behaviour and their mature attitudes – as one Year 6 pupil put it, 'We fall out but quickly make up.' Academic guidance is good. Pupils' targets are set across the school although a few targets are not clear enough to measure individual pupils' progress. An innovative system is that target booklets have been given to every child from Year 3 to Year 6. This new system is not fully embedded, as not all pupils at present know how to use the document effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher greatly deserves her high reputation in the school and local community for her visionary, caring and thoughtful leadership. Parents say, 'She does an excellent job', and are equally pleased with other school managers, who make significant contributions to the school in many ways. Together they ensure that every voice is heard and that all staff share the common aims of ensuring a high quality of learning and care, which extends to families and the local community. Governors also share the aspirations of the school. They have an excellent knowledge of the school and its development priorities and challenge the school management robustly, in addition to being immensely supportive.

Information for parents is clear and informative, not simply about areas to be taught but also with regard to how parents can support their children. Some information is also available in a range of languages. Bengali parents, for example, are extremely positive about the school, how it supports them and their children, and none felt it could be improved in any way.

Leaders are very accurate in their evaluation of their actions, and the impact of these on outcomes for pupils. The staff, including teachers and non-teaching staff, form many highly effective teams, sharing the common purpose of doing the very best in every way for their charges. They receive exceptional professional development, and are well supported in carrying out their many responsibilities. The provision and management of resources is highly effective, with many successful bids for additional funding to benefit the school and community. This enables the school to give excellent value for money. The school's contribution to local community cohesion is exemplary. It includes the community in its plans and support, ensuring that there is high quality provision for equal opportunities and no discrimination.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Park Primary School, Wednesbury WS10 9LX

Thank you so much for your welcome to what you called your 'fantastic' school, which we call 'outstanding'. We have never had so many doors opened for us and seen so many smiling faces. Thank you for the pictures you did for us saying 'Welcome', which helped us feel at home. We are pleased that you and all your parents are so proud of the school. You have every right to be.

This is what we liked most about your school.

- You have a wonderful start to school in Nursery and Reception, make excellent progress and have a marvellous outdoor area for your play and learning.
- You make good progress through the school because you have good, and some outstanding, teachers, who give you many exciting learning opportunities.
- You are very well cared for and are taught well to keep safe and healthy and care for others.
- The school ensures that you are 'a big family' and all your parents are welcome.
- Your behaviour is excellent, and your good attendance shows you enjoy school, especially your clubs, trips like the visit to the NIA this week, and camp.
- Your school council does a very good job, and so do your peer mentors. You enjoy helping the school and the environment improve.
- Your headteacher leads the school exceptionally well, and is helped by all the staff and the governors who are involved in making this school 'the best'.

This is what we want the school to do now, with your help.

- Help you to do better in your writing, by giving you exciting writing tasks more often.
- You can tell teachers what really interests you, and we think they can get other adults to help, so that your writing improves.

Thank you for helping us to have such an enjoyable and memorable visit.

Yours faithfully

Rod Braithwaite

Lead inspector