

Wednesbury Oak Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103926
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	308458
Inspection dates	17–18 April 2008
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Dunnacker
Headteacher	Maria Ashwood
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2004
School address	Greenacre Road Tipton DY4 0AR
Telephone number	01215 563387
Fax number	01215 024850

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large primary school serves an inner city area. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is average, although the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Wednesbury Oak provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Inspectors, parents and the school's senior managers all agree. Pupils' overall progress through the school is at the rate expected and they achieve satisfactorily, they join with standards that are well below the levels expected and they also leave with standards that are well below average. There are, however, signs of standards improving in some areas. Progress in Years 1 and 2, for example, is now good because teaching and the curriculum are good in these years. In the Foundation Stage and Years 3 to 6, teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. In Year 1 in particular, teachers closely match the work to the pupils' differing abilities. In other years, however, assessments and specific information provided on individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not always used to ensure that the work set is suitable for all ability groups. As a result, lower-ability pupils can sometimes find the work too hard and so make relatively slower progress than others. Pupils all have targets to aim for, and receive sound advice on how to reach them. Progress in writing has improved over the past 18 months and is now good, as the school's senior managers have made this their top priority. Other areas, such as reading, have not received the same amount of attention because the role of middle managers has not been developed to the point where they are able to lead on major initiatives. This limits the effectiveness of leadership and management, and as a result the capacity to make further improvements is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal development is also satisfactory. They mostly enjoy coming to school, but this has not always been reflected in their attendance, which has been falling in recent years. However, the school's efforts to improve attendance have borne fruit this year, and it is now at a satisfactory level. Teachers place great emphasis on improving behaviour, which is now good. This starts in the Foundation Stage, where improvements in personal and social skills are good, and continues throughout the school. Boys' confidence grows as they move through the school, but they are sometimes allowed to dominate discussions as girls sit quietly, and this results in some girls making slower progress than boys in Years 3 to 6. Pupils feel safe in the secure and caring environment that the school provides.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make a sound start to their education in the Foundation Stage. There is a happy, purposeful atmosphere in which children settle well and make good gains in their personal and social development. Children make steady progress in language and mathematical skills as a result of satisfactory teaching, and by the time they leave the Reception class their skills are well below average. There is a range of enjoyable activities, although there are missed opportunities outdoors to promote all six areas of learning effectively. The staff work well as a team to provide an interesting, caring and safe environment. Previous inaccuracies in the assessment of children's standards have made it difficult for staff to plan work that is a good match to children's abilities. However, staff have now been trained in assessment and the Foundation Stage leader has improved the planning to ensure greater consistency between the Nursery and Reception classes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use the results of assessments and the information provided on individual education plans to plan work that is suitably challenging for lower-ability pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Improve the progress of girls in Years 3 to 6, by ensuring they play a full part in lessons.
- Improve the role played by middle managers so that more areas in need of improvement can be tackled at the same time.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are well below average by the time pupils leave the school. Nevertheless, this represents satisfactory achievement, as their skills are well below those expected when they join the Nursery. Not all groups of pupils progress at the same rate, however. Lower-ability pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do not make as much progress as others, and some girls do not do as well as boys. Progress in writing is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage, but good in the rest of the school, where standards have much improved over the past year. Progress is slower, but still satisfactory, in reading, mathematics and science. In reading, pupils are held back by their weaker comprehension skills so the school has recently changed the reading scheme to one that places greater focus on comprehension. Pupils progress quite well in their mathematics when they can work things out on paper, but their mental arithmetic is much weaker. The school has introduced a scheme which relies on pupils practising at home, but this has received limited support from parents.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Good behaviour is established in the Reception class, where children learn to share toys and play together, and is maintained throughout the school. Older pupils are polite and friendly and generally enjoy coming to school. They understand what makes behaviour unacceptable and appreciate the reward system. Pupils know how to stay safe, and move around corridors sensibly. They can sometimes be a bit boisterous in the playground, and do not always watch out for others, for instance, during a game of football. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Pupils make a sound contribution to the community as prefects, playground buddies or 'problem solvers,' but play little part in decision making because opportunities to make their views known are limited. Pupils' moral and social development is good and their spiritual development and their understanding of life in multicultural Britain is satisfactory. Sound progress in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology ensures pupils are satisfactorily prepared for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. It is better in Years 1 and 2 than other years, and this is reflected in the good progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2. Teachers and pupils get on well together and pupils are encouraged and praised for working hard. This means that pupils generally concentrate well in lessons and are willing to try out new ideas. In Years 3 to 6, some girls are not involved as much as boys in lessons, and this is holding back their progress. Boys will often be quick to put up their hands and are chosen to answer questions, whereas girls just sit quietly and listen. Assessments of pupils' work and targets set in IEPs are not used well enough to guide lesson planning for different groups. This results in work that does not always meet pupils' needs, especially those of lower ability. The quality and use of teacher's marking also vary and do not consistently help pupils to improve their work. Teachers throughout the school ensure good discipline, so lessons are very rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Clubs, visits and visitors are strengths of the curriculum and enliven and enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how to lead healthy lives. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of sporting activities after school, but the time allocated for most year groups' physical education lessons is less than the recommended two hours per week. Where classes are taught in mixed-ability groupings, such as in Year 1, the curriculum is adapted well to accurately meet the needs of different ability groups. In other classes, the curriculum is the same for all pupils in the class, even though there is still a fairly wide spread of ability in the class.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All systems to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils in the school are in place and meet legal requirements, including those for child protection. The school has been successful in improving attendance by introducing a range of rewards to encourage pupils to attend more regularly. The school is quick to contact parents if their child is absent, or if there are emerging patterns of falling attendance. Some parents, however, still resist the school's efforts and do not feel it is the school's place to question absenteeism. The school now accurately tracks pupils' progress in English and mathematics, but not yet in science. However, previous inaccuracies of assessments in the Foundation Stage mean that the tracking of progress in the first few years at the school is unreliable. The use of targets ('learning ladders') is encouraging pupils to improve their work but they are not always written in a way that pupils can easily understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is making steady progress. Data is now used well to provide senior managers with a clear picture of where the school's main strengths and weaknesses lie. This is supported by

good quality checks on teaching, which make clear where improvements can be made. However, not all of the areas in need of improvement are included as priorities in the school development plan, because middle managers are not taking the lead in driving initiatives forward. In the areas where the senior managers have led the charge to raise standards, such as in writing and attendance, they have had notable success.

Governors play a satisfactory role. They are now taking a more businesslike approach to their work after a period of instability where there were five different chairs in the space of 12 months. They are now being more of a 'critical friend,' rather than just a 'friend.'

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Dear Children

Inspection of Wednesbury Oak Primary School, Tipton DY4 0AR

Thank you for welcoming us into your school and helping with our inspection. You made our job much easier by telling us what you liked as well as what you wanted to improve in your school.

Overall, we found that you are getting a satisfactory education. You are making satisfactory progress in your reading and maths and good progress in your writing. Those of you in Years 1 and 2 are doing well in reading, writing and maths. Your teachers make sure that your lessons are not disrupted by anyone being silly. Some of you told us that you find the work a bit too hard sometimes. So we have asked the teachers to give you work to do that always helps you learn as well as you can. Some girls do not do as well as boys in Years 3 to 6, because the boys get to answer more questions and give their opinions in lessons. So girls, you have got to get your hands up when you want to say something, we have asked the teachers to make sure you play as much part in lessons as the boys.

We were very impressed by how well you behave in lessons and how hard you work. You rightly let off steam in the playground and have a good run around, but you need to keep an eye on other pupils and what they are doing, so that you don't bump into each other. Your school is steadily getting better, because the people who run it know the things most in need of improvement. They have done well in getting you to come to school more often, but you can still do better by making sure your parents send you to school whenever you are fit enough. To help things improve more quickly, we have also asked the people who run the school to make sure that more teachers take charge of plans to improve your school and help you to learn faster.

With all best wishes for your futures

David Driscoll Lead inspector