

Monkspath Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104084
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	308505
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M Beaver
Headteacher	W J Hutchinson
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Farmhouse Way Shirley Solihull B90 4EH
Telephone number	01217 052686
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large school serving an extensive private housing development. Three quarters of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. Pupils of Indian heritage form the largest group. A small number of pupils are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The senior leadership team has been restructured in the last year and several new key appointments have been made. The school provides well supported before and after-school care facilities, as well as holiday care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education and has several strengths, particularly in relation to pupils' personal development. Most parents are very supportive of the school. This is evident in a number of comments such as, 'I couldn't have chosen a nicer school for my children.'

Although standards are generally above average, until recently, pupils' achievement has not been as consistent as it should be. Most children have skills in advance of those normally found when they enter Nursery. They make steady progress in Nursery and Reception so that most exceed the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average by the end of Year 2. In Years 3 to 6 there has been too much variation in pupils' progress. This led to a decline in standards in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science in the last two years. In 2007, pupils did not do as well as they should have done, given their good starting points at the end of Year 2. However, more effective use of assessment information and sharper target setting are underpinning further improvement in achievement in these year groups. Standards for current Year 6 pupils are above average. Over the past year, the achievement of almost all year groups has been at least satisfactory. There are still improvements to be made, particularly in mathematics, where, for example, there is overdependence on worksheets in place of the promotion of independent recording skills. Until recently, there have been inadequacies in the identification of and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and insufficient overview of the progress of pupils from particular minority ethnic groups, and this has affected their progress. Action has been taken to strengthen these aspects. A robust monitoring system has been implemented to provide staff with a detailed analysis of individual progress. However, the use of this information is inconsistent and does not always guide planning for lessons.

New appointments have strengthened the senior leadership team, which now supports the headteacher effectively. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate. In the recent past, not all identified weaknesses have been tackled with sufficient urgency, so that improvement has been slow to come through. However, the strengthened team, better monitoring systems and the guidance of an effective governing body are ensuring a more rigorous approach and a more rapid pace of change. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

The curriculum is good in Years 1 to 6, with well-developed cross-curricular links and a good range of enrichment activities. Some aspects of provision in the Foundation Stage do not ensure sure that the learning needs of the youngest children are fully met. Care, guidance and support are good, with both pastoral aspects and academic guidance well established. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Their behaviour is exemplary and they have a good understanding of the need to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils greatly enjoy school, which is evident in their good levels of attendance.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Foundation Stage provision is satisfactory and offers children a secure start. Relationships are consistently positive. Most children enter Nursery with above average skills, particularly in their personal and social development and in language. Satisfactory teaching ensures that they make

steady progress in the six areas of learning through both Nursery and Reception so that, by the start of Year 1, most children exceed the expected goals. In most lessons, planning is precise and takes account of the two year groups in each class. Children understand what they are to learn and activities have a brisk pace which engages their interest well. However, there are some missed opportunities to develop specific skills, such as speaking and listening. Occasionally, planning does not sufficiently identify the specific needs of Nursery children rather than those in Reception. This leads to some loss of pace and lack of challenge, particularly for the older children. Although children show good levels of independence overall, they do not always have enough opportunity to initiate activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils make faster and more consistent progress in mathematics.
- Ensure that the improved use of assessment data to guide teachers' planning becomes fully established across the school.
- Strengthen planning in the Foundation Stage to ensure that the curriculum meets children's needs fully and that time is used effectively to promote their learning.

A small proportion of 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

Children make satisfactory progress through Nursery and Reception, so that, on entry to Year 1, standards in most years exceed those expected. With thorough teaching, pupils continue to make steady progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards by the end of Year 2 are generally above average. Though still broadly average, standards at Year 6 have shown some decline in the last two years, particularly in mathematics. Pupils in the last school year did not make the progress that they should have between Years 3 and 6. Pupils are now making steady progress in all year groups but there is some variation in how well they are doing in different subjects, particularly mathematics. Currently standards in Year 6 are above average. The implementation of effective monitoring, together with more rigorous teaching, is underpinning increasingly good achievement. In the past there have been weaknesses in the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a lack of attention to the achievement of different minority ethnic groups which has been too variable. Effective coordination by recently appointed managers, more rigorous identification of these pupils' needs and a better match of work are now supporting more consistent achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good relationships are evident throughout the school. Children feel safe in school and speak of good provision to help them when they have difficulties. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils feel that there is very little bullying. The 'buddy' system is well established and as one pupil said, 'Everyone's your friend here!' Pupils show good commitment to the effective school council and its members are enthusiastically identifying areas where the school can make improvements. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Pupils engage well with the rich diversity of local cultures and there are strong links with local places of worship and religious leaders, including the Imam. Pupils' awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle is evident

in the choices made at lunchtime and the high level of participation in sport. Their economic well-being is supported well by enterprise activities such as the sale of produce to support the organic garden. They make a good contribution to the community through, for example, initiating and organising fund-raising events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage but there is scope to ensure that time is used more effectively and that planning meets the range of children's needs. Elsewhere, although still satisfactory overall, there is an increasing proportion of good teaching. Relationships are a strength and in many lessons, teaching is stimulating and challenging. The impact of teaching on pupils' achievement is improving as teachers gain confidence in analysing the detailed progress data to which they now have access. This is sharpening the match of work to pupils' needs. However, the emerging good practice now needs to be fully established throughout the school. The identification and support of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved. Marking is generally rigorous and supportive, but to a lesser extent in mathematics than in English. Time is not always provided for pupils to respond to the guidance given.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and well balanced, effectively enriched by visits out of school and a programme of themed days. The extra-curricular programme is extensive and well supported by pupils, contributing to their good personal development. A residential trip for pupils in Years 5 and 6 enriches their experience of outdoor activities and promotes independence. Pupils' understanding of the world of work is promoted well through established business links. Specialist teaching in subjects such as Spanish, games, music and dance extends learning well. Cross-curricular links have been creatively developed, enabling pupils to consolidate and extend their skills. This was evident, for example, in the way that dance lessons in Year 4 were based on science work in electricity. Information and communication technology (ICT) is more strongly promoted in subjects across the curriculum than was the case at the previous inspection. The provision for pupils' personal and social development helps children learn about their emotional responses to life experiences. In Foundation Stage planning, opportunities to develop skills such as speaking and listening are not always clearly identified. Gifted and talented pupils are well supported through setting and the breadth of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults promote pupils' health, safety and welfare well. Pupils are confident that there is always an adult to support them. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and carefully monitored. The school has strengthened its links with external agencies, which is leading to better support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems for identifying these pupils now have a greater degree of rigour but further evaluation is needed to ensure that they are fully effective. Across the school, pupils' progress is now monitored effectively. Pupils are increasingly confident in evaluating the quality of their work. There are year, class and individual improvement targets in literacy, numeracy and personal development. Pupils

have, overall, a good knowledge of these and teachers' marking is generally referenced to identified targets. As a result, targets have an increasing impact on individual progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The re-structuring of the leadership team has significantly strengthened the school's management systems and is having a positive impact on standards and progress. More rigorous data analysis is leading to improvements in teaching and a more consistent rate of achievement. While teachers now have detailed information about pupils' progress, leaders still need to ensure that assessment information is being used effectively to support the planning of lessons. Lesson monitoring does not always focus sufficiently on this or on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. The leadership team evaluates the school and its strengths and weaknesses accurately. Leaders now monitor pupils' progress systematically so that they identify promptly any loss of pace in pupils' learning. Extensive strategic plans guide the school towards improvement. Subject leaders are also active in monitoring standards. As a result, the pace of change is brisker than in the past. The governing body knows the school well. Governors act on evidence and plan well ahead, providing rigour, support and challenge to the leadership team. They have held senior staff to account during the recent decline in the school's performance and have been instrumental in planning changes in the leadership team. Financial management is effective, supporting developments such as the new ICT suite.

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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?	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	2
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?	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
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?	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	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

8 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Monkspath Junior and Infant School, Solihull B90 4EH

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. You were very keen to talk to us and we appreciated our conversations. We were impressed by your confidence, your care for each other and your enthusiasm for school. We found that Monkspath is a satisfactory school.

The main things that we found are:

- You are extremely well behaved, work hard and attend school regularly. Your teachers look after you well and give you good guidance about how you can improve your work.
- The teaching is sound and steps have been taken to make sure that you make steady progress through the school.
- You reach standards at the end of Year 6 which are higher than normally found.
- The curriculum is rich and interesting and you support the clubs well.
- The school is managed satisfactorily and the school leaders know what to do to make things even better.

We are asking staff to make these changes so that the school is more effective:

- Make sure that everyone makes the best progress that they can in mathematics.
- Make sure that teachers use all the information they have about you so that they plan really challenging work which will help you move on quickly.
- Make sure that the youngest children in Nursery and Reception have lots of opportunities to develop their speaking skills and to make choices about their learning.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

George Logan Lead inspector