

# Westminster Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	130944
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	315670
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Martin Cole

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	420
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Zaheda Jeewa
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pam Read-Law
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 April 2005
<b>School address</b>	Stamford Road Handsworth Birmingham B20 3LJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01214 642369
<b>Fax number</b>	01214 643730

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Nearly all pupils in this large inner city school are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils speak English as an additional language and a significant minority are at an early stage of learning English. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the normal times is high. Children start in the Nursery with exceptionally low attainment for their age. Since January 2007, the school has been led by an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed for January 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which has made good improvement in recent months. Pupils enjoy coming to school a lot and feel safe there. The great majority are keen to learn and try hard. They make good relationships with the adults as well as with their fellow pupils. The school is a harmonious community where pupils of different ethnic backgrounds get along well together and experience equal opportunity. Pupils respond cooperatively to what the school asks of them. The positive relationships and safe environment help pupils from the Foundation Stage to Year 6 to make satisfactory progress in their work. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 often make good progress. However, although many pupils leave the school with the standards expected for their age, the number who do not attain this standard is much higher than in most schools. Overall standards are low, partly because pupils start out with very low attainment, and also because a significant number join the school at a late stage of primary education, often from abroad and with little English. Some pupils achieve less than they could because of their poor attendance, despite the school's efforts to gain parents' support in rectifying this.

The teaching, too, is an important factor in pupils' progress. In recent years, a high turnover of teachers, including temporary staff, has adversely affected the quality of the teaching, sometimes slowing pupils' progress and resulting in some poor behaviour. Determined and effective leadership by the acting senior staff has done much to resolve this situation and ensure that progress and behaviour are satisfactory. New, more systematic ways of assessing pupils' attainment and progress and planning work to suit their differing needs and abilities have recently improved the teaching. Teaching is satisfactory now with some examples of good practice. However, with many teachers new to the school, there is some inconsistency in the success with which new approaches to the use of assessment are used. Guidance to pupils on their learning is satisfactory but not all pupils are sure how they can improve their work. An increase in the number of support staff working in classrooms has improved the help pupils receive and is particularly benefiting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school cares a good deal about pupils' personal well-being and it looks after pupils' safety and welfare thoroughly. A good deal of guidance is given to pupils on staying healthy. Pupils' understanding of how to keep healthy is satisfactory, although they do not always reflect this in what they choose to eat or in taking exercise.

The acting senior staff have shown strong and effective leadership in bringing about a wide range of improvements in a short time. Other school staff have responded to the more challenging targets set for them with clear commitment and good teamwork. However, many are new to their areas of responsibility, for example, as subject leaders, and are still receiving training in how to be accountable for pupils' progress and standards. New systems and strategies have begun to significantly increase the effectiveness of the school. The school has made very good use of the extensive external support offered to it by the local authority and partner schools as it emerges from a period of much difficulty in staffing. With a more stable staffing and clear and shared commitment to improvement, the school now has a satisfactory capacity to develop further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

The work of this part of the school is managed soundly and all adults work well together to create a calm, peaceful environment in which children feel safe, enjoy learning and engage well

in the activities provided. The children achieve satisfactorily, thanks to appropriate teaching and a curriculum that meets their needs. Teaching is sometimes especially effective in the Nursery class. There is just the right balance between activities provided by adults and opportunities for children to find out things for themselves. Though activities for all areas of learning are carefully planned, they do not often fire the children's imagination well enough nor always focus sufficiently on developing children's language skills.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase pupils' progress and raise the standards they attain and, in particular, ensure that teaching is consistently well matched to all pupils' needs.
- Improve the guidance to pupils to ensure that they understand clearly how they can raise the standard of their work.
- Extend and strengthen efforts to gain parental support in improving attendance.
- Develop the contribution of all staff with responsibilities, such as subject leaders, in checking the quality of provision and raising standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Recent national test results for pupils leaving the school have been exceptionally low. However, pupils' achievement is satisfactory when account is taken of their extremely low attainment on starting school, and of the high number who either have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are at an early stage of learning English. Boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds make similarly satisfactory progress in relation to their attainment when starting out. The recruitment of many new pupils into Years 5 and 6 over the last two years, often from abroad, has also had the effect of lowering the school's test results. The school's detailed shorter-term assessment records point to improving and satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 under more settled staffing during the last two terms. Pupils who took the most recent national assessments for Year 2 pupils have made good progress since joining Year 1; this also reflects the improving trend.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school a lot, feel safe, and behave well. A few sometimes behave in a volatile or uncooperative manner. Most pupils have a sensible attitude to their education, saying they enjoy school 'because the teachers help us to get a good education'. They are keen to learn. The high expectations and good role models provided by staff give pupils a clear sense of right and wrong. Pupils work and play cooperatively, showing respect for each other and for the adults in school.

The attendance rate is low, in spite of the considerable efforts made by the school. A significant number of pupils miss substantial parts of their education because of extended holidays taken in term time. Pupils contribute constructively to their community, for example, through school council activities. More generally, they do not take a lot of responsibility or show real independence and initiative because they have relatively few opportunities to do so. This, together with their limited literacy and numeracy skills, means they are not adequately prepared for the demands of future adult and working life.

Guidance to pupils on staying safe and being healthy helps them to have a reasonable understanding of the issues, although they do not always reflect this in the snacks they bring from home. The range of opportunities for pupils to take exercise while at school is narrow and pupils' take-up of those that are available is limited.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Lessons are well organised and promote enjoyment. Positive relationships between adults and pupils support learning and a consistent approach to managing behaviour ensures that pupils almost always behave well in lessons. Teachers use effective methods and resources, such as interactive whiteboards, to arouse pupils' interest and make explanations clear. Pupils who need extra help, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are identified quickly and given effective individual or small group support by well trained teaching assistants. Suitably qualified staff give pupils at an early stage of learning English successful additional help.

Many teachers are new to the school and, as a result, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, particularly in the use of assessment. Assessment of pupils' previous learning and needs is sometimes insufficiently accurate and the work planned for some pupils is then either too easy or too hard. Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not consistently show them how they can make their work better.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

In order to raise standards in literacy and numeracy, there has been an appropriate emphasis on these subjects. However, the senior staff have recognised that increased links between subjects could extend opportunities for pupils to practise basic skills while also making learning more exciting and relevant. They have begun to plan for this to happen. Valuable visits to places of interest enrich the curriculum, such as when pupils visit Stratford-upon-Avon while studying the Tudors or Twycross Zoo as part of their science work. Visitors to school also add breadth and excitement to pupils' learning and personal development. Some optional activities after lessons, including some in sport, usefully extend pupils' opportunities. However, the range of such activities, and pupils' level of participation are relatively limited.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school looks after pupils' personal welfare well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure and meet requirements. Successful measures to prevent bullying or any form of harassment result in the happy, safe feelings pupils show and report. Outside agencies are used well to help plan and provide support for pupils with particularly pressing learning or personal needs. The school has begun to keep a closer watch over individual progress through more rigorous and regular assessments. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory but inconsistent: they do not always understand well enough the targets they are given and how they can raise their standards of work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have proved a very effective team in taking the school forward from a period of severe staffing difficulties. On appointment, they quickly identified the most important ways in which the school needed to improve and introduced a range of relevant changes. They have won the trust and support of colleagues and worked effectively to reassure parents. Very good use has been made of a strong partnership with the local authority and other local schools to support school improvement. Ambitious targets for raised standards have been adopted and staff are rising to the challenge with a shared determination. Aside from the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other staff with management responsibilities, such as subject leaders, are relatively inexperienced in their roles, particularly in checking the quality of provision. They are improving in their effectiveness, however, as they benefit from a thorough programme of training in relevant skills. Although there are clear signs that the teaching and the consequent progress of pupils have begun to improve, much remains to be done to consolidate this and to bring about consistency in quality. Governors have worked closely with the local authority in resolving the school's staffing difficulties. They recognise the vital importance of stability in the staffing of the school, especially at the most senior level.

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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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

### 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

4 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westminster Primary School, Birmingham B20 3LJ

The inspectors who visited your school recently would like to thank all of you for your friendly welcome. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking with you.

You enjoy school and you get on well with each other and with the adults. You all make it a happy, friendly school. You have a sensible attitude to school, and to your work. This is helping you to make satisfactory progress in your learning. Most of you behave well, but a few let the school and themselves down.

Some of you told us how well the adults look after you. We saw for ourselves that the adults give you lots of help. The teachers give you suitable lessons and generally provide the right sort of work for you to do. They also try to help you understand how to stay healthy, but some of you don't seem to eat very healthily or take enough exercise.

We have found that yours is a satisfactory school. The adults in charge of the school are doing what they should to care for you. They are also trying hard to improve the school. However, we have suggested four areas for the adults to work on.

- Increase your progress and the standards you reach and, in particular, make sure that teaching is always at just the right level for each of you.
- Give you more advice to help you understand how you can improve your work.
- Try harder to encourage your parents not to let you stay away from school when it is not really necessary.
- Make sure that all the adults are involved in checking on how well you are doing and making sure that the school does its best for you.

You can help, too, by making sure you attend regularly and do not miss important parts of your education.

We wish you all the best for the future.

M H Cole Lead Inspector

**Annex B**

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Lead Inspector