

Palfrey Infant School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	104161
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	323980
Inspection dates	5–6 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	360
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	M. Yasin
Headteacher	Maria Raybould
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bescot Street Walsall WS1 4HY
Telephone number	01922 720 713
Fax number	01922 720 104

Age group	3–7
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Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large infant school serves a predominantly Asian community. Over a third of the children are of Pakistani background and about a third are from Bangladeshi families. There are a very small numbers of pupils from a range of other heritages. Virtually all the pupils come from communities where English is an additional language in the home, and half of the children are at an early stage of speaking English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average and an average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties and visual impairment.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage the school provides part-time education for three-year-olds in its Nursery. Most of these children transfer into the three Reception classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It has the confidence and support of its parents, many of whom wrote to say how pleased they are with the high standard of care and education the school provides. The following comments typify those expressed by many parents: 'the school is run extremely well and has some great teachers...', 'children are looked after well and they are educated to a high standard...' and 'we like the way the headteacher greets us every morning and we are pleased how quickly our children learn to speak English. The school deserves five gold stars.'

The school is extremely well led and managed by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Very strong teamwork has enabled the school to build successfully on the good practice identified at the last inspection. Excellent improvements have been made in raising standards and in ensuring pupils learn to speak English quickly. Senior leaders, staff and governors have very high expectations and are extremely ambitious for all their pupils. The headteacher has high aspirations for all pupils, recognising the need for them to make rapid progress as so many start with very limited skills in English. The school's systems to judge the quality of its work are very good and consistently focused on raising pupils' achievement and improving teaching and learning. Actions for improvement are quickly identified and swift action is taken to bring about the changes needed. Improved standards year on year since the last inspection indicate the notable success of this very effective approach. The school's capacity to continue to improve is excellent.

Children are given an excellent and happy education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a highly effective emphasis on developing children's early communication, personal and social skills, which results in outstanding achievement. From a very low entry point, especially in terms of their communication and literacy skills, children achieve exceptionally well. They attain below average standards in all the areas of learning on entry to Year 1, and many attain the expected standards in their personal and social development. Nursery and Reception children enjoy playing and working outside every day but they currently have few chances to investigate and explore or to practise their emerging writing skills outdoors. Pupils make excellent progress in the rest of the school and attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

Pupils' attitudes and enthusiasm for learning are excellent because of the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive. Relationships are very good; pupils like and trust the adults and feel safe and well cared for. Everyone in the school community is valued and treated with the utmost respect. Outstanding links with a wide range of agencies and the local community provide high levels of support for pupils and families. Pupils achieve outstandingly well because of the excellent quality of teaching and learning. By reinforcing language development in all activities and by pitching learning and support precisely at pupils' capabilities, staff ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy their work and become increasingly confident and fluent in English. Senior leaders make excellent use of precise assessment information to track achievements and to identify quickly any pupils in need of additional support. Intervention groups provide excellent support to pupils in danger of falling behind with their work. The vibrant curriculum is exceptionally well organised to motivate and enthuse pupils to learn. Staff value and celebrate the diversity of the school and local community, and achieve considerable success in promoting understanding and tolerance between pupils and families from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Excellent leadership and management, an outstanding partnership with parents and rigorous attention to children's welfare mean that children settle quickly and happily into school routines and feel very safe and happy. Children make excellent progress because staff work very well together in highly effective teams. They understand how young children learn best, carefully observe and monitor their progress and plan exciting activities. They are skilled at engaging children in interesting activities such as designing and printing garden pictures on the computer. Children play outside every day but there are limited outdoor opportunities for them to explore, investigate or practise their writing skills. Adults seize every opportunity to encourage children to communicate in more than single words and gestures, unless the child is at a very early stage of speaking English. In such cases, bilingual staff can slip easily between English and Gujarati or Urdu so that children feel secure and totally included in all learning experiences. Children at an early stage of speaking English receive excellent support and extra resources so that they quickly become bilingual. The introduction of regular, focused sessions to help Nursery and Reception children learn their letters and sounds is considerably enhancing their progress in early reading and writing skills. Reception children can write their names and happily learn to write their letters, taking great care to form them properly. This stands them in very good stead when they move to Year 1. Children's personal, social and emotional development is very good. Many lack social and emotional maturity when they start school but they quickly become happy and independent learners through the sensitive encouragement they receive. Their welfare is of paramount importance to the staff and children behave very well and are kept very safe. This friendly and supportive environment enables all children to flourish and from low starting points in the Nursery they attain just below average standards on entry to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area so that children can investigate and explore, and practise their emerging writing skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils' attainment and achievement have been rising steadily since the last inspection. Senior leaders have been relentless in devising ways to raise standards and improve pupils' achievement. In 2008, the school celebrated its highest results ever. The impressive results were achieved because of considerably improved methods of encouraging pupils to speak English, improved teaching of reading and writing, and stable staffing which included bilingual teaching assistants providing excellent support in all areas of the school. The school has also worked successfully to increase parental support and involvement in pupils' learning. Results were above average in reading, writing and mathematics, representing tremendous achievement for all pupils, including the large number of children who join the Nursery with no spoken English. All pupils, irrespective of gender, ability or ethnicity, make outstanding progress. The school sets very challenging targets and the commitment shown by all staff to ensure they are reached, and often exceeded, is a winning combination that lies at the heart of why the school is so successful.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils love school. Their attendance is good and much improved since the last inspection as a result of a dramatic reduction in the number of parents taking their children on extended holidays abroad. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They happily celebrate different faiths and customs and are very friendly towards each other, willingly sharing resources with no squabbling. They behave extremely well in lessons, in assemblies and at playtimes. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility by being school councillors and helping in assemblies. Their very positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their excellent achievement. They listen carefully in lessons, are keen to answer questions and to work hard, although Year 2 pupils say they do not like sitting for too long on the carpet! They have an excellent understanding of how to be healthy and are very clear about how to keep themselves and others safe. They make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community as they enthusiastically raise funds for McMillan Nurses, Barnados and the Pakistani/Kashmir Relief fund. They have also enjoyed working collaboratively with other local schools in the 'Young Enterprise' scheme and have confidently represented the school at the Walsall Dance Festival. Their excellent personal development and academic progress ensure they are fully prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well to the challenges set for them. A particular strength of the teaching is the staff's excellent knowledge and understanding of how infant children learn best. Staff provide excellent support to assist pupils' learning. For example, when pupils are writing they have excellent word banks, punctuation reminders and other cues to aid their spelling and handwriting. Teachers' infectious enthusiasm and the excellent way in which they display pupils' work create interesting and highly stimulating classrooms which enhance pupils' learning and achievement. Relationships are outstanding and teachers succeed in making learning fun by carefully matching activities to pupils' interests and abilities. Tasks are explained carefully and new and specific vocabulary is discussed so pupils understand exactly what they have to do. Teaching assistants are talented and highly skilled at supporting teachers and pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Senior leaders and staff provide excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are encouraged to talk to one another about their work and explain their thinking to other children and their teacher. This helps them to clarify their understanding and to test out their ideas, which supports their learning and English acquisition extremely well. The wide range of exciting learning opportunities contributes extremely well to pupils' enjoyment of school and their personal development. The diversity of pupils' cultural backgrounds is celebrated well in music, art and dance. The curriculum is skilfully adapted for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which ensures excellent progress towards their targets. Very effective links are made between subjects so that pupils can practise what

they have learnt in a variety of situations. The exceptional range of clubs and visits and visitors enhance pupils' learning even further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Child protection safeguarding, equalities legislation and health and safety procedures are excellent; this protects pupils and reassures parents. As a result, pupils are happy and secure, and they quickly gain in confidence and self-esteem, which is a key contributory factor to their outstanding progress. The school ethos is warm and very welcoming and parents are delighted to come in and share in parent workshops with their children. The parent support advisor does an excellent job in advising parents on the best ways to support their children. There are excellent procedures to track pupils' progress. These data are used outstandingly well by staff to improve pupils' achievement. Pupils themselves are very clear as to how they can improve their work in literacy and numeracy, but are not quite so clear in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very strong, focused leadership. They are supported extremely well by a highly motivated and committed team of staff and governors. There is no complacency and monitoring is totally focused on securing the very best opportunities for pupils to achieve as well as possible. This determined approach results in exceptionally productive teamwork and a willingness amongst all staff to share expertise and to learn from each other. Governors, who come from a range of cultures and backgrounds, are very involved in the work of the school, contributing well through their time and skills. They are very informed and confidently hold the school to account for its work. How things will improve for pupils is the question at the centre of all decisions made and actions taken by governors and staff. Self-evaluation is extremely thorough and well organised and completed in an open and productive manner. The school's commitment to achieving community cohesion is excellent. The school is highly respected in the local area because staff actively embrace and celebrate the multicultural community they serve. Everyone is treated with unconditional respect, and resources are carefully selected to reflect local families' different cultures. Consequently all community members have an increased understanding and tolerance of others' beliefs and values.

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

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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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	1
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**

9 March 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Palfrey Infant School, Bescot Street, Walsall WS1 4HY Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection of your school. We really enjoyed our visit because you made us feel very welcome. A lot of your mums and dads wrote to us saying that they think Palfrey is an excellent school, and we agree with them.

These are the things we liked best.

- You learn extremely well and the standards you reach are above those found in many other infant schools, especially in writing.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are keen and eager to learn new things.
- You enjoy the delicious school meals and eating healthily.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make learning exceptionally interesting and fun for you.
- You have an excellent curriculum and enjoy lots of visits to exciting places.
- Anyone who needs help with work or speaking English is always given it.
- Most of you learn to speak English very quickly.
- The teachers and staff take excellent care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher is helped by all the other staff and governors to lead and manage your school really well.

The headteacher, staff and governors have lots of good ideas to make the school even better. We agree with their ideas. So that your school can be even better, we have asked the headteacher and governors to make the outdoor learning area for the Nursery and Reception children even more exciting.

We are really glad you enjoy your school. We hope you will keep working hard and being good.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joyce Cox

Lead inspector