

New Invention Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104192
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	323985
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Lloyd
Headteacher	Anne Tyler
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
School address	Cannock Road New Invention Willenhall WV12 5SA
Telephone number	01922 710376
Fax number	01922 491091

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school, with an after school club, managed by the governing body, serves an urban area of Walsall. Almost all pupils in Years 3 and 4 have transferred from the adjoining infant school, but in Years 5 and 6 one in five are from other schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is above average. The school's staffing has been significantly disrupted since the school was last inspected, as a large proportion of staff have taken maternity leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

New Invention provides a satisfactory education. Current standards in Year 6 are broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement given these pupils' average starting points on joining the school. Most groups of pupils make steady progress as a result of the satisfactory curriculum and teaching they experience. Teachers always make clear what is to be learnt in lessons, so pupils know what they need to do and how to do it. The pace of lessons is often slow, with the whole class spending too long going over previous work with the teacher rather than moving on to activities where they develop new knowledge, skills and understanding. This is particularly the case for pupils in Year 3, who are making slower progress than others. Teachers adapt their lesson planning for the different ability groups, but sometimes the work is not demanding enough for the most able pupils. This is especially noticeable in science in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable. As a result, standards in science are below average. In contrast, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very high and pupils make outstanding progress as they move through the school. The tasks they are given are demanding and pupils love getting their teeth into really difficult, practical problems.

Personal development is satisfactory, as a result of sound care, guidance and support. Attendance is improving rapidly and is now above average because the school has taken effective actions to reduce absenteeism, and the school does a good job of ensuring that pupils are health conscious. The learning mentor plays an excellent part in supporting vulnerable pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour. Pupils of all backgrounds get on well with each other, and pupils have a good involvement in the school and wider local communities. Enjoyment and behaviour are good at break times. Enjoyment and behaviour in lessons, however, are satisfactory, as pupils respond to less stimulating teaching by drifting off task and engaging in low-level disruption, such as talking to their neighbour.

The school has made steady progress since it was last inspected, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. Pupils' progress is tracked well in most respects, so the school's leaders, including governors, are clear where pupils are falling behind. Checks on teaching provide an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses, but insufficient account is taken of the findings when drawing up the school's priorities for future actions. As a result, while the school's leaders provide extra support and lessons for those falling behind, which work well in helping them catch up, the root causes of any underachievement are not being tackled in the most effective manner. However, the actions that leaders have taken have proved successful in addressing the most important areas of underachievement identified at the previous inspection, and provide evidence for the school's satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of learning, especially in Year 3, and make lessons more stimulating by giving more time to activities where pupils develop new knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Ensure that the work given to the most able pupils is sufficiently demanding, especially in science in Years 5 and 6.
- Make better use of the results of checks on teaching to develop priorities for action that tackle the root causes of any identified underachievement.

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

Current standards in Year 6 are above average in English and average in mathematics. This represents satisfactory progress in each of these subjects as standards in English were higher than those in mathematics when these pupils joined the school. In previous years, there have been indications of underachievement in mathematics, but the school has successfully focused its attentions on improving pupils' progress in the subject and standards have risen this year. While this was successful, the school paid less attention to science and standards have fallen as the most able pupils are not reaching the levels of which they are capable. Standards on entry to Year 3 are rising rapidly. The school initially did not adjust its teaching and curriculum quickly enough to meet the needs of these more able pupils, so they have got off to a slow start. This is being addressed and they are beginning to catch up again. Progress in ICT is much better than other subjects. Here, standards are very high, with pupils adept at not only the practical uses of a range of technologies, but also at evaluating how well ICT is used by others and how its use can be improved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and put this into practice in their daily lives. Most look forward to coming to school, but say that this is more for meeting their friends than for the enjoyment of lessons. Most pupils, especially the older ones, feel safe in school. Some younger ones, and their parents, express concerns over rumours of bullying. There are a few instances of bullying in the school, but these are dealt with effectively and the learning mentor is now working with parents to dispel the rumours that have been circulating. Pupils have a sound knowledge of other cultures and their spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities that are provided for them to take responsibility in the school and local communities, particularly when this involves helping others less fortunate than themselves. The attitudes they develop in school, along with their progress in consolidating basic skills, ensure that pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are always clear about what they are going to be doing because teachers write lesson objectives in language that is easily understood by all. These are then broken down into the different skills that pupils will develop, so pupils are well aware of what the teacher expects of them. Lessons start with a whole-class introduction that sets the scene well. However in some lessons the introduction goes on for too long so that pupils become bored. Their attention wanders and they start to daydream, doodle or chat to their friends. In ICT lessons, however, pupils quickly move onto the computers where they work on stimulating individual activities that are well matched to their ability. In science, in Years 3 and 4, the different ability groups are given tasks that build upon that which they have learnt previously. In Years 5 and 6, though,

the higher and middle attaining groups are given similar work, which is too easy for the most able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides good opportunities to encourage pupils to lead healthy lives. A sports coach is employed to provide specialist training, for example, and children are encouraged to grow and eat their own vegetables. The extra lessons and withdrawal sessions for individuals and small groups who have fallen behind in their work ensure that they catch up and can rejoin the main lessons. However, lessons are disrupted as pupils move in and out of classrooms to attend them. Further disruption is caused by the nature of the building. Many classes are also 'corridors' to others, so work sometimes has to stop while another class passes through. Time is also lost after break when too long is given to pupils to finish eating their fruit. Pupils have many opportunities to use their excellent ICT skills in other subjects. They love using computers, but find some other lessons a bit boring because the tasks are presented in a rather dry manner. The school recognises this, and ensuring a more creative approach to lessons is a key priority for its current work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a safe environment, including at its after school club, because good attention is paid to health and safety. The school meets all current safeguarding requirements. Good actions have been taken to improve attendance. These have included some innovative approaches, including the use of text messaging and a helper for pupils who are persistent absentees. The learning mentor, whose work is highly valued by parents and pupils alike, is particularly effective in helping individual pupils manage their own behaviour so they do not disturb others. Good use is made of ICT to allow pupils to report instances of bullying anonymously. These are few in number and in almost all cases relate to a falling out between friends. In the very few instances of a more serious nature, the learning mentor takes effective action to nip any problems in the bud. The school has a range of rewards and sanctions to encourage good behaviour, but these are not used consistently by all staff. The quality of academic guidance is also inconsistent. All pupils refer to their targets using ICT. The targets are clear and appropriate. However, they are not consistently used to provide advice on how to improve work, either through marking or in discussion with pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A completely revamped management structure now provides good opportunities for all staff to play a role in driving forward improvement, although the part they play in checking the quality of what the school provides is more limited. The tracking of progress made by pupils is accurate, and provides a good basis for focusing on and supporting any groups that are underachieving in English and mathematics. In science, progress is not tracked in Years 3 and 5, partly because the manager responsible has been away from school. An excellent audit has been carried out of pupils' involvement in the life of the school according to their ethnicity, and this has led to good plans to address any mismatches identified so that equality of opportunity can be assured. The school is aware that the next stage is to consider pupils'

socio-economic backgrounds and faiths as well. Governors play a good part in checking the quality of teaching, but the findings of these checks and other monitoring activities are not used sufficiently well when deciding where to focus actions to address the underlying causes of underachievement. As a result, resources, particularly teaching assistants, are used to help pupils catch up, rather than to support pupils in making good progress in the first place.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

24 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of New Invention Junior School, Willenhall, WV12 5SA

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. The things that you told us helped us to understand what is good about your school and where it could be better.

Overall, we found that you are getting a satisfactory education. You leave Year 6 with standards that are similar to most other pupils across the country. You are brilliant at ICT and clearly love using the computers to tackle really difficult problems. You told us that you like coming to school to see all your friends, and that everyone gets on well with each other. You also told us that lessons in English, mathematics and science can be a bit boring sometimes, and we agree. When you do not find the work interesting, or if it too easy for you, you do not make as much progress as you should. So, we have asked your teachers to spend less time on introductions and more time on tasks that each of you find just hard enough that you can do them if you really think and work hard. You can help too, by always concentrating as hard as you can and not disturbing others who are trying to work. Your teachers, and especially the learning mentor, have worked hard to make sure you come to school more often, and you are responding well by coming whenever you can.

The people who run the school are working to make it a better place. They keep a close eye on how well you are doing so they can spot anyone who is not keeping up with the rest of the class. When they do see someone falling behind, they give you extra support that soon helps you to catch up. They also know why you do not always learn as much as you could, but they do not always do enough to prevent it from happening. So we have asked them to draw up some plans for actions that will put right anything they find that is not working as well as it could.

With all best wishes for your futures.

Yours faithfully

David Driscoll Lead inspector