

Pennyhill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135215
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	329058
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Terry Elston

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	712
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	9
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Smith
Headteacher	Juliet Woolley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hollyhedge Road West Bromwich B71 3BU
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school was formed from two adjacent primary schools in September 2007, and the current headteacher started in April 2008. While most pupils are from White British backgrounds, a fifth are of Asian, African or Caribbean heritage. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools. There is a children's centre on the school site that includes the Sunny Skies Day Nursery managed by the school. Before- and after-school clubs are run by the Young Men's Christian Association and are inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pennyhill is a satisfactory school. The new leadership team has done well in a short time to amalgamate the staff of two schools into an effective team. The headteacher leads with clear and high expectations of what staff and pupils could achieve, and there is a justified sense of purpose and optimism throughout the school. The strong focus on standards is beginning to have an impact, and improvements are working their way through the school. This can be seen in the above average attainment and good progress in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, while standards are broadly average, in mathematics they lag some way behind those in English and science, particularly with regard to pupils' problem-solving skills and calculation skills. Standards in reading are above average throughout the school because pupils enjoy books and teachers are very good at teaching the skills necessary to work out unfamiliar words. The headteacher is supported well by the senior leadership team, but the school recognises the need to enhance the role of middle managers so that they have more responsibility for school improvement.

Parents' views of the school are very positive. Many echo the comments of one who spoke of the 'great strides it has made since the merger'. They particularly appreciate the way staff encourage their children to consider the needs of others and give them a clear sense of right and wrong. This is evident in pupils' good personal development and concern for those in the world who are less fortunate than themselves. They say how much they enjoy school and the 'really good friends we make'. They speak knowledgeably about the need to live healthy lives, and enjoy the nutritious food served for them at lunchtime.

Pupils speak highly of their 'fun', 'hard-working' teachers. While the teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, lessons range from satisfactory to outstanding. Some of the best teaching is in the Nursery and Reception classes and Key Stage 1. Where the teaching is less effective, the needs of the wide range of abilities in the class are not met well enough. As a result, the least-able pupils are struggling to do the work, while the higher attainers find it too easy.

The curriculum is planned well so that pupils enjoy their work. It has a good focus on literacy in all subjects, and pupils produce some good writing, particularly in history and geography topics.

Parents are right to feel that the school provides good care, support and guidance. The staff are very good at supporting pupils who need help, and they always know who to turn to if they have worries. The safeguarding systems are rigorous and monitored regularly. Parents praise the work of the well-run children's centre that provides valuable care for their children and opportunities for them to develop their own skills.

With the clear evidence of improving standards and a secure overview of its strengths and areas for development, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and, as one parent commented, 'makes school days so much fun'. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below typical expectations for their ages, and make such good progress that their standards by the end of the Reception Year are above average. Children make a fast start in both the school Nursery and the Sunny Skies Day Nursery. They soon learn to listen carefully to adults, and do particularly

well in their personal development and their early reading and number skills. Parents rightly say that induction procedures are good, which is why their children settle into school life quickly. The curriculum is planned well, and provides exciting opportunities for children to learn. There is mostly a good balance between activities chosen by themselves and those provided by adults. However, in the Reception classes, the adults sometimes do too much for the children and this limits their independence.

The staff use the stimulating outside area well to promote children's learning in all areas. The good arrangements for health and safety and children's personal development ensure that they work in a safe environment, behave well and develop good social skills. The teaching and learning are good, and often outstanding. The staff use assessment information well to inform their planning of activities, and make sure that children's individual needs are met. Teachers make activities interesting and exciting, and children quickly develop positive attitudes to learning. For example, one group learned how to add and take away by counting pieces of fruit, and they loved eating the answers.

The provision in the school Nursery and the Sunny Skies Nursery is led and managed well. Classroom areas are well organised, teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated rigorously and the adults have a good idea of how they could be improved further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' mathematical skills at Key Stage 2, particularly their ability to do quick calculations and solve problems.
- Ensure the teaching at Key Stage 2 gets the best out of both the high- and low-attaining pupils.
- Give middle managers more opportunities to evaluate the teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility in order to raise standards.

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

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. By Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils have made good progress from their starting points. The highlight is in reading; many pupils read fluently and with good expression. Standards by Year 6 are broadly average, overall, but while they are securely average in English and science, they are below average in mathematics. Many pupils struggle with quick mental mathematics and find it hard to decide which calculation to use when set problems. When the two schools merged, there were some inconsistencies in the way mathematics was taught, and this slowed down the development of pupils' skills. As with the younger pupils, reading is a strength at Key Stage 2, and pupils have developed a love of books. While overall progress is satisfactory, there is evidence that the measures put in place to raise standards during the school's first two years are having a positive impact on pupils' attainment. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall, and do well in their reading where the support is most effective.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and attendance rates are around the national average. They behave well and mostly concentrate well in lessons. However, some become restless when the work is too easy. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe and the dangers of smoking and alcohol. They reflect deeply on topics such as sadness and the loss of loved ones, and listen carefully to other pupils' problems. They are never afraid to ask questions to make things clearer, as was seen to good effect when they quizzed the visiting cellist about how she became such a good musician. Pupils have a good awareness of their community, and enjoy making improvements to their school through the school council, raising funds for charities and helping to clear litter in the area. They mix very well with pupils from different backgrounds, and like discussing their different cultures and faiths with each other. They are satisfactorily prepared for the future, although some of the older pupils find mathematics difficult. They are learning to become good citizens, and they learned much about the needs of others when they helped the local authorities to regenerate a deprived area near the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy their work because teachers make learning fun. The pace of lessons is nearly always brisk, and there is a good balance between the teacher explaining things to the whole class and pupils working independently or in groups. The teaching of literacy is consistently good, and is raising standards significantly in both reading and writing. In mathematics, not all the teachers place enough emphasis on mental mathematics or the use of their number skills to solve problems. This is why standards are not as high as they could be. Relationships are good, and teachers use praise effectively so that pupils feel able to take risks with their answers without fear of failure. In some lessons, mostly at Key Stage 2, the teachers focus on the middle-ability pupils, which prevents the high- and low-ability groups from making the best possible progress. The comprehensive assessment systems provide a clear picture of pupils' progress and teachers' marking is an important way that pupils learn how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned well to provide an interesting range of activities. The school has been successful in designing a good literacy curriculum that gives pupils valuable opportunities to hone their skills, both in literacy lessons and other subjects. The mathematics provision has taken longer to develop, and teachers miss some opportunities to work out problems and use mathematics in other subjects. A good programme for personal, social and health education helps pupils to understand the importance of living healthy lives, keeping safe and showing consideration for the feelings of others. The school provides a wide range of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum and develop pupils' cultural awareness. The strong focus on drama and music adds much to the provision, and parents say how much their children benefit from these sessions. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum that are popular with pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The good quality of care, guidance and support has a positive impact on the personal development of pupils. Pupils know who to approach if they have problems, and are made to feel secure and valued. The school has good partnerships with health professionals, and robust safeguarding systems in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils. Attendance is monitored carefully, and absence rates are falling steadily. The good links with the children's centre mean that pupils and parents can get valuable support. The school tracks pupils' academic progress systematically in English and mathematics, but systems are less rigorous in other subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has high aspirations for the school, and sets challenging targets for both staff and pupils. She has been successful in meeting the considerable challenge of allocating responsibilities to the staff of two schools. She has managed change at a sensible pace and morale is high. The headteacher is supported well by other senior leaders, who share her commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. By monitoring the achievements of all groups of pupils in English, mathematics and science, this team makes a valuable contribution to evaluating the school's effectiveness. An example of the impact of this teamwork can be seen in the higher standards in writing that followed detailed analysis of data and effective action to improve the teaching. Middle managers are contributing to this process, and they support teachers well in their subjects. However, they are only just beginning to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning first hand and look at data that compares this school with others. The school promotes community cohesion well through strong links with the local community, good working partnerships with the children's centre, in-depth work on different faiths and cultures across the world and exciting links with schools overseas.

The recently formed governing body is enthusiastic in its support of the school and is keen to develop its skills. Governors represent the range of different cultures of the area, and provide good links with parents.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
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**

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pennyhill Primary School, West Bromwich, B71 3BU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons, play so happily outside and sing so beautifully when practising for 'Oliver!' The many of you who were kind enough to speak to us showed how much you enjoy school. Your school is satisfactory. This means that some things are good, but others could be better.

What we found out about your school

- You work hard and make satisfactory progress. Your standards are similar to most schools, but the older ones among you could do better in mathematics.
- Your behaviour is good, and you help make the school a happy place.
- You live healthy lives and know how to stay safe.
- You think a lot about people who are not as fortunate as you.
- Your leaders run the school satisfactorily and help it run smoothly.
- The good range of activities provided for you are interesting, and you enjoy the clubs at lunchtime and after school that teach you important skills in things like music and sport.
- Your teachers are doing a satisfactory job. They work hard to plan interesting work and help you when you find things difficult.
- All staff at the school take good care of you and keep you safe.
- The Nursery and Reception give children a good start to school.

What we would like the school to do now

- Make sure that those of you in Key Stage 2 improve your numeracy skills. You can help by trying hard to remember your tables and thinking carefully about how to solve problems in mathematics.
- Help the teachers provide work that is right for all of you in the class so that you make the best possible progress.
- Get those in charge of subjects to check more closely on how well you are doing.

Good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Terry Elston

Lead inspector