

The Dame Ellen Pinsent School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103615
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355409
Inspection dates	9–10 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Carter
Headteacher	Debbie Allen
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who observed 15 lessons, taught by 9 different teachers. Meetings were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner. The inspectors observed the school's work, looked at information about pupils' progress, staff surveys and safeguarding procedures. They analysed 56 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is the rate of progress for each of the different pupil groups, academic as well as personal, as rapid as the school's evaluation indicates?
- What is the current rate of attendance and how well this is improving?
- How effective is provision in Reception in securing suitable progress for all children, especially with their self-directed learning, including outside learning?

Information about the school

This is a large special school. Broadly 40 per cent of pupils are of White British heritage and 20 per cent are of Pakistani origins. The remainder are from a wide range of other ethnic groups. A higher than average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. About a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. A majority of pupils have either moderate learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders as their primary learning difficulty. A small minority of pupils have severe learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, speech language and communication difficulties or hearing impairment. A small minority of pupils are looked after by the local authority. The school has several recent awards including Healthy Schools Status and Artsmark Gold.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Pupils' achievement, including the progress they make academically and personally, is outstanding. These outcomes result from high quality teaching and an outstanding curriculum. Parents and carers are extremely positive about all aspects of the provision, especially the exceptional care provided. The school is a welcoming and very happy place to be where each member of the community feels valued and pupils are confident to try new things and do their very best.

Pupils not only make outstanding progress in English and mathematics, but significant progress is evident in all subjects including personal, social and health education and information and communication technology. There is no difference in the rate of progress being made by more- or less-able pupils, for those with autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or those who speak English as an additional language. Most pupils who reach National Curriculum levels are progressing at a faster rate than their mainstream peers.

Teaching is exceptionally good and is characterised by the in-depth knowledge all staff have of pupils' attainment in each strand of every subject. Seamless team work, with a focus on each individual's progress by teachers and teaching assistants during every task, ensures that no pupil is left behind and that work is adapted immediately to their needs. This contributes to pupils' outstanding behaviour in lessons where they are courteous, caring towards each other and pay careful attention to what they have to do. Pupils are extremely keen to do their very best and are quite confident to contribute their ideas and try things out.

Pupils are prepared exceptionally well for their futures through outstanding care guidance and support, by rapid progress in all basic skills and an excellent development of their independence and ability to work in pairs and teams. In addition, their very positive attitudes to learning mean that they are very punctual to all lessons and rarely waste time during them. Attendance, which is gradually improving each year, is broadly average compared to all schools and above that found in other, similar schools. This is despite quite a number of unavoidable, ongoing absences for medical reasons. Nevertheless, the school recognises that progress is slowed for a very few pupils who take extended leave during term time.

Children make good progress in Reception and the overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The range and quality of activities to encourage imaginative learning outside is relatively less well developed. In addition, interactions with children, to encourage and inspire them to explore more creatively and productively for themselves, are not as thoroughly or effectively planned as they are in the rest of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

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Outstanding leadership has overseen rapid, ongoing improvements and exceptionally detailed, regular and incisive analysis of each pupils' progress, with a sharp focus on how well different groups are doing. The result is accurate self-evaluation and very well-directed planning for further improvement. As a result, any deficiencies are immediately addressed. For example, pupils' progress in the data handling strand of mathematics was slower than in other strands but, having been identified and addressed, progress in this part of the subject is now equally outstanding. The school's capacity to improve is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in Reception by:
 - strengthening the range and quality of opportunities to encourage imaginative learning outside
 - ensuring that all interactions with children encourages and inspires them to explore more creatively and productively for themselves.
- Increase attendance by:
 - seeking to reduce the amount of extended leave taken by a very few pupils during term time
 - drawing parents' attention to the link between attendance and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons pupils show that learning is important to them and, because they can see their progress clearly as they go along, they work very hard. Pupils enjoy school very much as their survey views and those of parents and carers show, which is why they achieve so well. Those with autistic spectrum disorders become exceptionally well involved in joining in. For example, in one mathematics lesson they became engrossed in comparing and ordering numbers, quite confidently taking their turn at the front to solve problems. Pupils' outstanding progress is also seen in reading, writing, communication, speaking and listening and science. Most pupils are making at least good progress and, for broadly one third of them, progress is faster than for the top 25 per cent of all pupils nationally. This rapid progress has been increasing each year. Pupils with severe learning difficulties show a mature confidence to express their opinions. In one science lesson, for example, they were excited to share their own experiences, some through signing or symbols, accurately describing the feel of different materials. Progress is equally outstanding for those looked after by the local authority. Each year a small group of pupils develop such strong skills that they are able to return to mainstream school.

Pupils' outstanding awareness of healthy living is evident in the very high take up of healthy school meals and high attendance at after-school sports clubs. This is recognised in the recent Healthy Schools Status awarded to the school. Pupils feel exceptionally safe and are secure in knowing that there is almost no unkind behaviour. They contribute in several ways, including having significant input into the exciting playground and outside area, acting very responsibly as peer mentors or in the 'friendship squad' and helping to take away litter in the local community. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural awareness is exceptionally well developed, typified by the very generous way they enjoy

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each other's successes, appreciate the wonders of the world around them, and deeply respect each other's differences.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

The school cares for pupils exceptionally well and works very closely with all relevant agencies to support their needs, especially the most vulnerable. This is enhanced by excellent partnership work with parents and carers to involve them as fully as possible in their children's education and well-being, which they appreciate greatly. As a result, no particular group of pupils is disadvantaged by their difficulties and they all make excellent progress. Teaching is particularly outstanding in terms of meeting different needs and ensuring that learning is built rapidly and systematically. Excellent attention is paid to consolidating learning so that knowledge and skills are secure. Fast-paced and interesting activities motivate and engage pupils. Pupils' involvement in their own learning is enhanced by very clear learning intentions and detailed ongoing feedback as each lesson progresses. The management of difficult behaviour is highly skilled and learning is rarely disrupted. There is clear improvement over time in the behaviour of pupils with behavioural difficulties as a result of this care and guidance. Attendance has been a focus for the school and the measures taken have been effective in reducing extended leave

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taken during term time and medical appointments taken during the day. The outstanding curriculum is enriched, to benefit pupils in sport, the arts and subject expertise, through extensive partnerships with other organisations and schools. The school has recently achieved the Artsmark Gold award in recognition of their work. Lunchtime provision is remarkably good with detailed attention paid to each pupil who needs to learn how to choose and eat food, use cutlery and behave at mealtimes. The outside play areas are a delight. The school is a lead practitioner in several areas, including specialist approaches to communication and behaviour management.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is very well led by the headteacher who is supported effectively by senior leaders. All staff work very effectively as a team and share the same aspirational vision for helping pupils learn and develop as well as they possibly can. Targets are much more challenging since the last inspection and are already being exceeded.

Senior leaders use extensive information about pupils' progress over time to address any areas of weakness in all subjects. This has led to an exceptional consistency in high quality learning recently and continuous improvements to the quality of teaching. As a result, the school has moved from good to outstanding overall since the last inspection.

Members of the governing body bring many skills to its work and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. With several new members, great care has been taken already to securely develop the roles required and the governing body remains self-critical and robustly challenging to the school.

Engagement with parents and carers is outstanding, with high attendance and levels of satisfaction at meetings, reviews and several well-regarded workshops and support groups. Careful and effective attention is paid to involving hard-to-reach groups and communication includes the use of tapes and other language versions so that all parents and carers can access the information provided. The outstanding promotion of equal opportunities results from rigorous and regular monitoring of the progress and inclusion of different groups and immediately eliminating any differences. There is no evidence of any discrimination which is reflected in the respectful and tolerant attitude of pupils towards each other. Safeguarding procedures are of high quality and they are constantly updated to reflect national and technological developments. The awareness of safeguarding issues by all staff and governors is extensive and is based upon regular training. The promotion of community cohesion is good. The work locally to promote partnerships and understanding of different groups is excellent and the school is a harmonious and

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respectful community where everyone is valued highly for their differences regardless of background or beliefs. The school recognises that links nationally and internationally are less well developed and this is gradually being addressed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Excellent links with parents, carers, pre-school providers and other agencies ensure that children have a smooth start in Reception. This is further strengthened by excellent care and guidance, where each child and their particular type of special educational need is supported and provided for individually. Children make good progress in all areas of learning, and most exceed their targets. This is because effective, whole-group and individual teaching is successful in enabling children to develop a wide range of skills, particularly in literacy numeracy and personal development. Reception is a happy place where busy children act as their favourite characters, match shapes, recognise letters and learn how to glue, make pictures or play games, for example. Children show increasingly mature independence and social skills, with most learning how to work individually, do things for themselves, share and take turns and show kindness to each other. In addition, assessment is detailed and thorough and enables staff to work as a team building skills systematically. The school recognises that outside provision, although much improved, lacks sufficient opportunities to stimulate learning imaginatively. For example, the links with current topics are not well reflected in this space. In addition, interactions with children sometimes lack a spark of creativity to inspire children to explore things excitedly for themselves. Good leadership has led to several recent improvements, including the way progress is measured, the rate of progress being made and more recently with children's creative development.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire and they were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They particularly like the way their children enjoy school, how safe their children are and how very good the teaching is. Several parents and carers made positive comments, typically including: 'This is a wonderful, happy and safe environment for my child' and 'My child has been transformed, his behaviour is better, he is learning very well and he is very happy.' There were no comments expressing concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dame Ellen Pinsent School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 56 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 120 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	77	12	21	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	70	17	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	63	21	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	63	21	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	73	14	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	63	20	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	59	22	39	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	50	22	39	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	63	20	36	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	55	22	39	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	59	20	36	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	33	59	22	39	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	77	12	21	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Dame Ellen Pinsent School, Birmingham B13 0RW

Thank you for being so welcoming during our visit to your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons. Yours is an outstanding school with many interesting things going on, just as you described. School leaders work very hard to make sure that your work gets better and better. Excellent teaching helps you to make outstanding progress and do very well in all your subjects. We like the way you really enjoy your learning and always try to do your best.

We have asked your teachers to see that even more of you to attend regularly and to make sure that your parents and carers know how this will increase your progress. We would also like to see more of the exciting activities which help the very youngest children in Reception learn for themselves.

You could all help by sharing your ideas with your teachers about how these things could be done.

You told us how proud you are of helping the local community, for example in the raising money for the 'mile long path'. You were keen to describe how the school keeps you extremely safe and looks after you very well. The way you look after each other and enjoy school is very impressive and your behaviour is some of the best we have seen. This is why your school is such a happy and welcoming place to be.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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