

# Birch Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109893
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bracknell Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	375356
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Chris Nye HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	430
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alistair Lidster
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Harding
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23–24 June 2010
<b>School address</b>	Leppington Bracknell Berkshire RG12 7WW
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	8–9 November 2011
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 15 teachers. They held meetings with staff, the local authority, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including attainment data, curriculum files, monitoring records and evidence of strategic planning. Questionnaires were not distributed to parents and carers during this inspection, although their views were gained through informal discussions, a formal meeting with a representative group and scrutiny of the outcomes of the school's own parental questionnaire.

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

- The level of pupils' achievement in English and mathematics throughout the school.
- Whether assessment and tracking information is being analysed effectively and used to ensure that teaching meets all pupils' learning needs.
- How well leaders and managers at all levels ensure that pupils' achievement is steadily improving and the school's capacity to improve is secure.

## Information about the school

Birch Hill is larger than the average primary school. It has an Early Years Foundation Stage that admits children part-time from the age of three. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of those having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is an onsite after-school club that is not managed by the governing body and which was therefore not inspected.

When it was last inspected, the school was judged to require special measures. It was asked to raise achievement in English and mathematics, improve the quality of teaching and assessment and ensure that leaders and managers at all levels drive forward improvements. Prior to this inspection, it was visited on two occasions by Her Majesty's Inspector to monitor its progress in addressing the key issue.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

It is of great credit to all who work in and support the school that, since it was judged to require special measures, huge efforts have been made to successfully reverse a trend of underachievement. Very effective leadership has ensured that well-considered changes have been put in place to remedy all the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. As a result, there is secure evidence of significant and rapid improvement in provision throughout the school, and this has resulted in improved outcomes for pupils. The school now provides a good standard of education and care for its pupils and has a good capacity to build on this in the future.

The quality and impact of teaching on pupils' learning is good, with many areas of strength. Lessons are imaginatively planned to ensure that teaching meets the wide range of pupils' needs, interests and abilities. Throughout the school pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of behaviour and learning and they say that they enjoy their lessons; one described them as 'fun learning'. The rapid improvement in the presentation of pupils' written work exemplifies the success that the school is having in raising standards. Assessment is used well to inform teaching and teachers' marking is of a high standard. However, although effective systems to raise pupils' awareness of their learning and progress by encouraging them to assess their own and others' work have been introduced, they are not yet consistently applied throughout the school. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which effectively meets the needs of pupils because it is enhancing the quality of teaching and contributing to the high levels of pupil motivation.

Attainment is average, but because pupils now make rapid progress, their overall achievement is good. Children entering the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress through the school and a history of underachievement has been successfully reversed, especially in reading and writing, where they reach levels typical for their age. In mathematics, although attainment is satisfactory, progress has been slower because recently introduced strategies to improve pupils' skills in mental mathematics and in applying mathematical skills to solve problems are not yet fully embedded.

There is a strong sense of team work throughout the school and leaders at all levels have been very successful in embedding ambition and driving improvement. The role

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of the governors has been strengthened considerably. The school works effectively with parents and carers and makes good use of partnerships with external agencies to promote pupils' learning and well-being. Although pupils' cultural development is good, the school recognises that pupils do not have a sufficient awareness of others represented in multicultural United Kingdom.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in mathematics by embedding newly introduced strategies to improve pupils' speed and skill in mental mathematics and problem solving.
- Develop pupils' understanding of, and opportunities for, assessing their own and others' work so that they develop a greater awareness of their own learning and progress.
- Develop pupils' understanding of different cultures represented within Great Britain.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The percentage of pupils entering Year 1 with the expected skills in reading, writing and mathematics varies, but more recently this has been slightly higher than normal. Pupils make good progress and a higher than average percentage achieve the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, although slightly fewer than average achieve the higher levels. A suitably strong emphasis is placed on raising standards in speaking and listening, which is resulting in improvements in pupils' skills in this area. In Key Stage 2, pupils' good progress means that their attainment is average by the time they leave in Year 6. Pupils did particularly well in their English work, where they reached higher than average levels of attainment. In mathematics, inspection evidence suggests that the pace of progress has accelerated, although attainment does not match that in English. Throughout the school, pupils' progress is good overall because the teaching is well planned, makes good use of resources and successfully motivates pupils to do well. For example, in one lesson pupils were enthusiastically discussing different writing genres because a variety of texts were very well chosen to capture their wide-ranging interests. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also achieve well as they receive well-organised and effective support to aid their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, relative to their starting points. This is because their needs are accurately identified early on, they are provided with well focused support, and rigorous tracking systems ensure that their progress is closely monitored. Teaching assistants make a particularly valuable contribution to the progress of such pupils because they are well trained and efficiently deployed. Pupils who are gifted and talented also have their needs met well because teaching and learning activities are planned to ensure appropriate

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levels of challenge.

Pupils’ good behaviour, harmonious relationships and the way in which they care for each other make a strong contribution to the extent to which they feel safe in school. They are confident that adults take their concerns seriously. From an early age they have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and fit and there are a number of opportunities to enjoy and take part in sporting activities. They demonstrate good levels of responsibility and make a good contribution to the local community, for example through organised visits to elderly local residents. Close collaboration with the education welfare service and a focus on attendance have resulted in attendance improving to above average. Pupils demonstrate good skills, particularly in literacy, team building and information and communication technology (ICT), which are effectively contributing to their future economic well-being. Pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good overall, although opportunities to extend their understanding of other cultures within Britain are not sufficiently well embedded.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

The main factor which is resulting in improved outcomes for pupils is the significant improvement in provision. Teaching is typically good, especially in the older year groups, where some is outstanding. The impact of staff training and a strong commitment to improve standards have had a positive and sustained impact on improving the quality of teaching. Lessons are imaginatively planned, with a strong

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

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emphasis on ensuring that activities meet the needs of all pupils. Learning objectives are clearly explained and referred to throughout lessons. Good quality resources, especially in ICT, enhance pupils’ learning. Well judged interventions by teachers ensure that the pace of learning is usually brisk, although occasionally this slackens when opportunities are missed to keep pupils on task. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils’ learning. Pupils’ attainment and progress is accurately assessed and tracked and this is informing teaching and learning. Regular pupil progress meetings are held between class teachers and senior staff to ensure that every pupil is being well supported to meet challenging targets. Marking is consistently helpful in providing guidance on how to improve. However, assessment routines overall are satisfactory, rather than good, because pupils’ confidence in assessing their own and others’ learning varies too much across the school.

The well structured curriculum provides breadth and balance and meets pupils’ needs and interests well. Cross-curricular work is motivating pupils very well because it makes good links between subjects and uses ICT effectively to enhance learning. A strength is the variety of clubs, specialist events, visits and activities which enrich the curriculum. For example, a history topic on the Victorians was brought to life by a ‘Victorian Day’, which provided an outstanding opportunity for pupils to experience a day in a Victorian school-room.

The quality of care, guidance and support is a strength because systems to ensure pupils’ safety and well-being are effective and rigorously applied. This is illustrated by the good support provided to pupils when they move from one key stage to the next, including to secondary schools. Staff know the pupils well and relationships between adults and pupils are good, encouraging pupils to be confident and caring towards each other. The school environment is welcoming and teachers and support staff have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils, especially those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Under the very effective leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team, the school has demonstrated a rapid and impressive improvement in addressing its previously identified weaknesses. They have successfully galvanised staff enthusiasm and a strong sense of collegiality is driving a well-paced programme of improvement, the successful outcomes of which are now

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clearly evident. Leaders at all levels know the school’s strengths and weaknesses well because systems to monitor progress in teaching and learning against challenging and measurable targets are rigorous. The outcome contributes well towards accurate whole-school evaluation and this is effectively informing detailed and regularly reviewed strategic plans.

The role of the governors has been strengthened considerably. They are well led and organised, know the school well and understand performance data. They provide a well-judged balance between supporting the school and holding it effectively to account. Partnerships with external organisations, including the local authority, have been very successful in helping the school drive improvement forward. The school effectively engages with parents and carers and, in a recent school questionnaire, the overwhelming majority said that their children enjoyed coming to school.

All safeguarding procedures, including those connected to the vetting of staff, are securely in place, rigorously applied and overseen effectively by the governing body. The school promotes equality of opportunity well, does not tolerate discrimination and tackles any quickly should it occur. The progress of different groups is monitored effectively to identify any that are falling behind. Senior leaders recognise that although the school effectively contributes to community cohesion, especially at a local level, more needs to be done to develop pupils’ understanding of multicultural Great Britain.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skill levels, especially in



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communication, language and literacy, below those found nationally. They make good progress and enter Year 1 with skills that are generally above expected levels, although in some aspects, such as creativity and their use of language for communication and thinking, fewer than average achieve the expected levels. Strengths are in their achievement in reading, writing and mathematical development. Relationships between adults and children are excellent and activities are well planned to be exciting and enjoyable, providing good opportunities to learn basic reading writing and number skills. For example, children enjoyed talking about the properties of different shapes, with one describing a circle as 'one round side'. There is a strong emphasis on developing good social behaviour, independence and cooperation within a safe environment. A range of high quality and well-organised resources available both inside and outside classrooms aid children's learning. Detailed planning, which covers all areas of learning, is used well to inform teaching and learning and careful assessment identifies where there are gaps. Relationships with parents are good. Staff are very well trained and work effectively as a cohesive team under the clear direction of the phase leader. They are passionate about their work and strive constantly to make improvements. Transition arrangements between home and school and into Key Stage 1 are effective and action plans identify suitable improvement priorities.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so. In this case, parents were spoken to in a formal group discussion and informally in the playground. In addition, outcomes of the school's own parental questionnaires were scrutinized. Parents feel that the school is making good progress and they are happy with the standard of education and support that it provides. They say that their children are safe and well cared for. Some feel that communications between the school and home could be better and the school is working hard to improve its systems of communication in response to this concern.

## 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



10 November 2011

Dear Children

### **Inspection of Birch Hill Primary School, Bracknell RG12 7WW**

I have really enjoyed my visits to your school over the last year and a half and I would especially like to thank you for the warm welcome that you gave my colleague and me when we visited you. I really enjoyed sharing part of your 'Victorian School Day' with the Year 6s! I am absolutely thrilled to be able to tell you that, because of everyone's hard work, Birch Hill no longer needs special measures. Congratulations to all of you!

These are the things that your school does particularly well.

- All the grown-ups have worked really hard to sort out the weaknesses that the last inspection reported on, and you now go to a good school, which is great!
- You are really well cared for and good teaching is helping you to make much better progress, especially in your reading and writing. Well done!
- We were really impressed with how well you behave in the playground and in lessons. Keep it up!
- The grown-ups in charge of the school do a really good job in leading the school and ensuring that it continues to improve.

Although the school is doing well, there are still things that it can improve even more. I have asked the leaders of the school to focus on three things.

- Making sure that you make faster progress in mathematics, especially in mental mathematics and problem solving.
- Giving you more opportunities to assess your own and others' work to help you become more aware of how well you are learning.
- Developing your understanding of other cultures in Great Britain.

You can help by continuing to try your hardest in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Chris Nye  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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