

Birstall Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107635
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	377614
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Katharine Halifax

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Spencer
Headteacher	Kyrstie Joslin
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited eight lessons or parts of lessons taught by six different teachers. Further time was spent looking at pupils' records, work books, and information about pupils' progress. Inspectors held meetings with school leaders including representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and carers, and other professionals. They looked at a range of documentation including: the school's review of its work, the current development plan, minutes of governors' meetings, documentation to ensure pupils are safe, and pupils' Learning Journeys (a selection of work chosen by the pupils to reflect their progress). The responses to 40 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- Do boys and pupils with more complex learning needs make sufficient progress in Key Stage 1?
- How effective is the provision in raising attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 2?
- How effective is the provision in accelerating progress through Key Stage 2, particularly for pupils who receive free school meals?
- How effective is the new leadership team in monitoring the school's performance and driving school improvement?

Information about the school

In addition to serving the local community, nearly one half of pupils at this smaller-than-average school are from out of the area. Almost all are of White British heritage and none speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. While the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies significantly from year group to year group it is, overall, above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is high. The pupil population has risen by 20% since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving partway through their primary education is higher than found typically.

The school has gone through considerable changes since the last inspection. There have been three headteachers in the past two years. A permanent headteacher was appointed four terms ago. In addition, there have been a number of changes of staff and to the accommodation. From the start of this school year, the governing body has taken over the responsibility for before- and after-school care.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. However, it is improving rapidly. Under inspirational leadership it has successfully weathered a period of instability and is going from strength to strength. Through good professional development the quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Equally, improvements to the curriculum have resulted in pupils enjoying their learning, having greater confidence, and a more positive attitude to their work. This is an inclusive school that welcomes pupils of all capabilities. Over the past year, it has taken pupils who have been permanently excluded, or who were in danger of being excluded, from other primary schools.

The level of attainment on entry to the school varies considerably year-by-year but is overall below that typical of young children. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so by the end of their year in the Reception class many are working within the early learning goals. Pupils' progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 has been variable and, until the past year, teacher assessment has not always been accurate. There has been improvement in the attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 6, but the trend is inconsistent because of the composition and size of each year group, and of the number of pupils arriving at the school late in their primary school career. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. While most make good or better progress in lessons, they are still making up for underachievement and slow progress earlier in their school careers. As a consequence, by the end of Year 6, pupils' level of attainment is below average. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in English is above the national average. Pupils make greater progress in reading and writing than they do in mathematics. Many lack confidence in applying their knowledge to solve problems, or to handle data, and too few pupils attain the higher Level 5. Teaching has many strengths, but on occasion the planning of activities for independent learning and the use of support staff in mathematics reduces pupils' rate of progress.

Pupils' personal development is good. They have a good understanding of keeping safe and living a healthy lifestyle. They are proud of their contribution to the school and village communities, and are looking forward to working with a link school in Sri Lanka. Staff have worked hard to improve the rate of attendance and have been successful in reducing absence and improving punctuality. However, despite the systems in place, the attendance of a handful of pupils who miss school for no good reason, or who take holidays in term time, affects their attainment.

Leaders know the school in detail. Their enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge are moving the school forward at a rapid rate. The rigorous monitoring of classroom practice and the robust tracking of pupils' achievement is accelerating pupils' progress. Considerable information has been collected to ensure there are no gaps in learning and that every pupil is challenged. Leaders know the priorities that will lift achievement. Self-evaluation is generally accurate. The clear vision for the school, the skilled leadership team, and the strengths in teaching and the curriculum gives the school good capacity to sustain improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - ensuring all lesson plans focus on the knowledge and skills pupils will acquire during group and individual tasks
 - ensuring pupils fully understand what they need to do to attain the next National Curriculum level
 - reducing the absence of the few pupils who miss school or who take holidays in term time.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - increasing the time pupils spend investigating, researching, discussing and solving problems
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to gather and handle data
 - increasing the contribution that teaching assistants make to lessons
 - identifying and providing for pupils who are more able or gifted.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

As a result of better teaching and an improved curriculum, pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They enjoy their tasks, show enthusiasm for their lessons and produce a good volume of neatly presented work. The behaviour of the majority is impeccable. A handful of pupils, who in the past have exhibited unacceptable behaviour, are responding well to the new behavioural systems. Pupils say the school is much calmer than in previous years and they can get on with their lessons undisturbed. They say this is because of the system of 'it's good to be green'. Pupils' aspirations are changing. They want to succeed but, while they know the National Curriculum targets they are aiming for, they are not always absolutely certain how to get there.

While there have been differences in the level of attainment reached by particular groups of pupils, these are being narrowed through good teaching. This is especially so for pupils who receive free school meals. The termly tracking of pupils' progress identifies pupils who are falling behind. Recognising that boys were not achieving as well as girls at Key Stage 1, a more-active, boy-friendly curriculum has been put into

place including having a well-planned selection of practical activities to motivate, support and extend lesson topics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are identified early and targets in their high-quality individual education plans are referred to in lessons and updated as they are achieved. Attainment in writing has improved for all pupils. Staff training, work on phonics, the introduction of a spelling programme and the expectation that pupils will improve their literacy in all subjects is improving achievement. The setting up of an 'experiment area' in the centre of the school has captured pupils' interest in science and is raising the level of attainment. While attainment in mathematics is improving, and pupils have a suitable understanding of calculation, and of shape, space and measures, many lack confidence in using and applying their mathematical knowledge to solve problems.

Pupils are developing personal qualities that prepare them well for life out of school. Their acquisition of functional numeracy and literacy skills, and their ability to use information and communication technology is increasing at a good pace. In addition weekly 'life skills' sessions have ensured pupils can, for example, sew, wash their clothes, iron and change an electric plug. Pupils say school routines and the curriculum enable them to feel safe. They particularly appreciate the 'feelings box' and the 'angry volcano'. Pupils have a good understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Community classes held three times each week, bringing together pupils of different ages, results in thoughtful discussions on numerous issues. For example, in addition to raising pupils' moral awareness, a debate on the topic, 'Is it right to tell a lie?' contributed considerably to pupils' speaking and listening skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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

Teachers plan their lessons conscientiously with clear learning objectives that are checked at the end of each lesson. Lessons provide an 'entry' activity and 'mental starter' to engage pupils in learning. Different tasks are provided to challenge pupils of differing capabilities. However, during group and independent work, planning often identifies the activities to be undertaken rather than the knowledge and skills to be acquired. Teachers have a very good understanding of how pupils with learning difficulties learn. Close teamwork between teachers and support assistants allows learning to be accelerated by precisely targeted adult support. Support assistants contribute considerably to pupils' learning in reading and writing, but this is not always the case in mathematics, as some assistants lack confidence in this subject.

Assessment is now accurate. Good systems are in place to keep a check on pupils' progress, including pupils assessing themselves against 'success criteria' at the end of each lesson. Marking is first rate and is accelerating pupils' progress. Displays in classrooms and corridors support learning and provide a rich learning environment. Pupils in all age groups are proud of their 'Learning Journeys'.

Changes to the curriculum have made it more appealing, more meaningful to pupils and better matched to their needs. Through a change to a themed, skills-based curriculum, pupils are able to make links between subjects and transfer their knowledge. As part of the current theme of 'musicals', for example, pupils in Year 6 preparing to present 'Joseph' are learning the history, geography and religious beliefs of Israel and Egypt. The extension of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum into Year 1 allows younger pupils and those who progress more slowly to continue to learn through play. Staff have identified pupils with a gift or talent, but leaders recognise they are not providing fully for pupils who are more able or gifted in mathematics. Useful links with partner schools contribute well to achievement in modern languages and the creative arts.

The school is a welcoming community with well-established links with a range of external services to support the needs of all pupils. Positive relationships between staff, parents, carers and pupils ensure pupils receive good quality guidance. Furthermore, workshops on topics such as calculation encourage parents and carers to be more involved in their child's education. Weekly 'care and concern' meetings identify and provide for pupils who are vulnerable. The appointment of a learning mentor gives valuable support to pupils who are experiencing difficulties either in school or at home. The breakfast club offers a supportive atmosphere and gives pupils a positive start to the day. Furthermore, alongside other strategies, the club is bringing about improvement in the rate of attendance and punctuality.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders are clear and determined in their pursuit of excellence. The senior leadership team has had a remarkable impact on school improvement over the past four terms. Through innovative ideas and quality professional training linked to the school's priorities, it has enhanced what is taught and how it is taught. Robust systems track pupils' progress and are used effectively to identify and provide for pupils who need additional support. Roles and responsibilities have been reorganised to cover the management of all areas of the curriculum and aspects of school life. Through termly pupils' progress meetings, staff recognise they are accountable for their pupils' progress and are now making suggestions as to how to pick up the pace of progress and raise attainment. Pupils, staff, parents and carers are pleased to make a contribution to the school development plan.

Governance is good. The governing body has improved significantly and now meets legal requirements. Following the last inspection a new Chair was appointed and several new members joined the board. Considerable training has been undertaken and all policies are in place. Though initially guided by the headteacher as to what questions they should be asking, they have gained the confidence and knowledge to ask the most challenging of questions. Along with the senior leadership team, they have successfully reduced the deficit budget and are in a position to plan ahead with confidence. At the time of the inspection, good policies and procedures were in place to ensure all adults have an in-depth understanding of safeguarding pupils. Community cohesion is good. The school is a harmonious, outward looking community. Leaders work passionately to promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity. They are successfully remedying disparities in the level of attainment between different groups and are successfully closing the gap between subjects.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress and achieve well because of the good provision. As a result of the caring, nurturing environment, children make good gains in all areas of learning. Through good leadership and careful monitoring, areas of weakness have been quickly recognised and remedied. For example, on identifying that children's knowledge and understanding of the world was low, a 'diversity' week and numerous

practical activities such as celebrating Diwali have brought this up to the same level as other areas of learning.

Adults have worked hard to provide a stimulating environment indoors and outside. Teaching and learning are good. An effective balance between adult-led and child-centred activities caters well for children's academic and personal development. A series of 'key questions' in each area promote children's learning as well as extending their communication, language and literacy. Children grow in confidence. They enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage, forming good relationships and playing well together. They especially enjoy using the extended outdoor area, showing the inspector the produce they have grown and their 'secret garden'. Links with parents and carers are good and memorable moments and achievements are captured in detailed 'Learning Journeys'.

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 in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A little over one quarter of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is a lower proportion than typical in primary schools. Some parents and carers chose to make comments, many were positive. Parents and carers particularly appreciate the warm atmosphere of the school and helpful staff. Others reported areas of concern. The inspection team endorses the strengths identified by parents and carers. In response to their concerns:

Behaviour : Leaders were quick to react to pupil and parental concerns regarding behaviour. Behaviour seen during the inspection was good with that of most pupils being impeccable. Very good procedures are in place to meet the needs of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social needs, and were observed being followed during the inspection.

Mixed-age classes: In order to operate within the budget leaders have had to form mixed-age classes. Suitable planning is in place to ensure pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birstall Community Primary 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 inspector received 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 149 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	73	11	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	31	78	8	20	1	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	45	19	48	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	58	14	35	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	65	10	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	55	15	38	3	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	53	19	48	0	0	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)	19	48	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	53	17	43	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	55	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	55	13	33	3	8	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	27	68	12	30	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	58	15	38	1	3	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	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 is 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).

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.



18 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birstall Community Primary School, Batley, WF17 9EE

First may I say what an enjoyable time my colleague and I had when we visited your school. Thank you for talking to us and for showing us around your school. We especially enjoyed hearing all about your visits and your achievements. It was clear from our chats and the questionnaire replies we received from you and your parents and carers that you enjoy school, and think that you are safe and well cared for.

Your school has gone through a lot of changes over the past couple of years. It provides you with a satisfactory education, but it is improving rapidly. Better teaching and a more imaginative curriculum are speeding up your rate of progress. You receive good care and support, especially those of you who have problems in your lives or who have special needs. As well as working hard, you have a positive attitude to everything the school offers. You enjoy lessons, clubs and visits out of school. You are well behaved. The improvements are happening quickly because you have good far-sighted leaders.

Here are some areas we have asked your leaders to consider to make your school better.

- To work with you to lift your level of attainment.
- Your attainment in English has come on in leaps and bounds, you now need to make similar progress in mathematics.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Katharine Halifax
Lead inspector

