

Birchwood Grove Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125944
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	381155
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	Clive Dunn

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	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Fellows
Headteacher	Catrin Jones
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
School address	Birchwood Grove Road Burgess Hill RH15 0DP
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Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	11–12 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clive Dunn

Additional inspector

Janet Simms

Additional inspector

Crystal Gail Robertson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. All pupils were participating in a whole-school sports day throughout the second day of the inspection. Inspectors observed 16 lessons for at least 25 minutes each, and sampled a further 13 lessons for shorter periods. They held discussions with pupils, staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of the school's records and documents, teachers' planning, pupils' work, and questionnaires that were returned by pupils, staff and 138 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special education needs is below average. The school meets the current floor standards, by which the government sets minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress. The on-site pre-school provision is not managed by the governing body and was not part of this inspection.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. The total commitment to securing the highest quality of learning, shown by both pupils and staff, is impressive. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Consequently, pupils develop a wealth of skills that prepare them exceptionally well for the future. The extremely high expectations of leaders and staff at all levels contribute significantly to the school's success.
- Across the school, pupils make rapid progress over time, resulting in their outstanding achievement. They develop high levels of independence, collaboration and reflection. Attainment is significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also achieve extremely well in other areas such as sport and the arts.
- The outstanding quality of teaching inspires pupils. Using a wide range of strategies, teachers ensure learning is personalised to pupils' differing needs. Teaching assistants are highly skilled and knowledgeable. The quality of verbal dialogue and feedback between pupils and adults is exceptionally strong. Written feedback and marking of pupils' work, although good, does not always reflect the same high quality and move pupils on in their learning as effectively.
- Pupils develop incredibly positive attitudes towards learning. Their excellent behaviour and enthusiasm make a significant contribution to the school's vibrant, purposeful learning atmosphere. Whilst always mutually supportive, they are able to challenge each other's ideas in a completely appropriate manner. Pupils feel safe at school at all times.
- Leaders' excellent management of performance and strong leadership of teaching secure a quality that is consistently at least good, with much that is outstanding. There is absolutely no sense of complacency. As a united team, there is an overwhelming sense of energy and passion across the school. The outstanding curriculum created by staff provides pupils with rich, memorable learning experiences.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure dialogue and feedback, between pupils and adults in written marking,

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moves pupils on in their learning as effectively as that shared verbally in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most pupils enter school with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. All sizeable groups of pupils, including boys and girls, make rapid and sustained progress over time. Consequently, by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils are already working at above average levels. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is significantly above average, including in reading, and by the end of Key Stage 2 it far exceeds that of all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The majority of pupils attain higher levels than those expected for their age. The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also outstanding because they typically make much quicker progress compared with similar pupils nationally.

Throughout the school, pupils are highly engaged in their learning. Extremely positive experiences in the Reception Year quickly lay firm foundations for the independent and collaborative learning skills that enable children to make rapid progress. For example, a mixed group of children wanted to make their train track run on the ceiling. After observing them, the well-timed and very effective questioning by the teacher prompted the building of bridge-like structures to begin to lift the track off the carpet. Across the school, pupils are increasingly adept at applying their skills to solve problems or carry out investigations, for example in mathematics or science. Their impressive ability to reflect and explain their thinking through such tasks significantly deepens pupils' understanding. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also develop independence extremely well at an individualised level. Their exceptionally positive attitudes and confidence enable them to make sensible attempts at tackling tasks that may seem initially quite tricky. This is typical of the considerable resilience demonstrated by all groups of pupils.

Younger pupils rapidly develop their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics). Their mastery of these skills means they are confident to tackle unfamiliar words in their reading and use a broader range of vocabulary in their writing. Across the school, pupils' attitudes to reading are highly positive. When talking about their work, pupils instantly, and unprompted, make important links with other things they have done, reflecting the depth in their learning and understanding. Pupils are rightly extremely proud of their work and school.

Topic work and work relating to particular experiences, such as the French trip or the Year 2 overnight stay, is of remarkably high quality and reflects a very broad range of learning. Almost all parents and carers expressed positive views about their children's rate of progress. The only complaint from Year 6 pupils was that they would soon have to leave.

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Quality of teaching

Teachers' highly effective and thoughtful planning translates into exciting and meaningful learning experiences. Excellent links between subjects support pupils' knowledge, understanding and ability to apply their skills in different contexts exceptionally well. Linked to an Olympics topic, pupils in Years 5 and 6 tackled a mathematics-based Medal Muddle to organise the medal table of countries. Pupils' total clarity about the skills they were developing ensured they thought and reflected carefully about how to tackle the problem in a logical and methodical way. Meanwhile, in Years 3 and 4, a literacy-based activity tasked pupils with creating a comic strip centred around one of the Olympic values. Previously pupils had explored these carefully, reflecting on what each one meant to them personally. This is just one example of the highly successful promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the teaching.

Parents and carers are rightly overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching. Extremely effective support from teaching assistants ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not become too dependent. Teachers plan precisely for where this support may be needed; but during lessons adults observe and judge effectively where their assistance is required and when to draw back to promote independence. The quality and depth of discussion, reflection and verbal feedback between pupils and with adults are impressive. Written marking is encouraging and frequently identifies areas where pupils can improve their work. Pupils often respond to this, but their responses do not always reflect the same depth of thought as their verbal discussions. In addition, teachers do not always check that they have followed their advice closely enough. Consequently, leaders recognise that it does not always deepen pupils' understanding or move their learning forward as effectively as it could.

The teaching of reading and phonics is exceptionally rigorous. During a session in Reception, children worked very effectively in pairs to check whether they had matched the sounds correctly, identifying and exploring any mistakes. Very tightly structured sessions in Years 1 and 2 ensure pupils learn, recall and apply sounds at a brisk pace with high levels of confidence. Teachers take frequent opportunities to reinforce this through other activities alongside successfully promoting a genuine love of reading. Year 1 pupils developed their understanding of how to precisely answer questions about the book they were clearly enjoying by 'grabbing' the answer from the text. Excellent questioning and verbal feedback from the teacher promoted both pupils' reading skills and enjoyment.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils have incredibly positive attitudes to learning and work exceptionally effectively together. Their high levels of mutual support frequently advance their learning. Pupils have the maturity and language to challenge each other's ideas in an entirely appropriate manner. In lessons and

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around the school their positive conduct sustains the strikingly purposeful atmosphere in which pupils thrive. Inspection evidence strongly indicates that this is true over time. Staff, parents and carers are unanimous that there is a good standard of behaviour, reinforcing the overwhelmingly positive views of pupils.

Pupils unanimously report that they feel safe at school and this is confirmed by parents and carers. Many pupils are insistent that bullying does not occur, and incidents are extremely rare. Pupils are acutely aware of such issues, including verbal, physical or cyber bullying, and they actively promote high levels of mutual respect. Pupils are confident that should any bullying occur it would be dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Year 6 pupils, preparing a website to enable friends to keep in contact once they move on to their various secondary schools, reported taking great care to ensure it had the necessary filters to keep them safe online. Rates of attendance are significantly higher than national figures.

Leadership and management

Exceptionally high levels of ambition for the school and its pupils are evident from the headteacher and through leaders at all levels, including members of the governing body. There is a relentless drive to secure the highest possible quality of education for pupils. Strong teamwork ensures improvements are embedded consistently and securely. Consequently, the impact on pupils' outcomes is very quickly evident, such as the high quality of their phonic and investigative mathematics skills. Systems for monitoring and evaluation, managing performance and professional development are closely interwoven. Combined with the exceptional quality of leadership from the headteacher, and at different levels, the school has been highly effective in raising the overall quality of teaching and achievement from good to outstanding. Leaders do not leave this to chance, grounding evaluations and plans for improvement in precise and incisive diagnosis of what needs to change, sometimes backed up by research.

The governing body is highly knowledgeable about the school. Governors share the passion of staff and challenge leaders appropriately in support of the drive to continue to build on the school's high performance. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements and systems to promote the welfare and well-being of pupils are rigorous and extremely effective. The inspection found no evidence of discrimination of any kind, and the outstanding achievement of different groups of pupils reflects the school's highly successful promotion of equal opportunities. Some parents and carers particularly highlighted how strategies such as Fabulous Finishes enable them to share their children's work in a variety of ways at the end of topics. Leaders expect that the imminent launch of a new website will further supplement the wide range of ways the school already uses to communicate and link with parents and carers, an area about which a very few expressed concern.

The exceptional curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of rich, memorable experiences. Just in the two days of the inspection, in the penultimate week of the academic year, this included the Olympic cross-curricular theme, whole-school sports

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day, the school's Alice in Wonderland show, golf lessons, and the Years 4 and 5 team becoming county cricket champions. The considerable breadth of the curriculum, including extensive enrichment and extra-curricular activities, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



13 July 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Birchwood Grove Community Primary School, Burgess Hill
RH15 0DP**

Thank you so much for the tremendously warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and it was a real privilege to see how well you are all doing. Thank you particularly to those of you who spoke with us, read to us, or answered our questionnaires. You were very insistent that 'Birchwood Grove is an outstanding school' and we agree.

Your achievement is outstanding. You make very quick progress and develop skills that are far beyond those expected for your age by the time you leave. This is because the teaching in the school is outstanding. We were extremely impressed with your outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes. You work exceptionally well together and develop excellent personal and social skills. You do extremely well in a wide range of areas, from literacy and numeracy to sports and the arts.

One of the reasons that your school is so successful is that those responsible for running it never stop looking for ways to make it even better. To help them with this, we have asked them to make sure that marking moves your learning on as well as discussions about your work during lessons do.

You can all help by keeping up your excellent attitudes and thinking carefully about how best to respond to what your teacher writes when they mark your work.

Yours sincerely

Clive Dunn
Lead inspector

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