

Birchfield Community Primary School

Birchfield Road, Yeovil, BA21 5RL

Inspection dates 4–5 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The achievement of pupils across year groups and subjects is too variable.
- Not enough pupils make above average progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good or better because some teachers are not accurately assessing pupils' work.
- Teaching assistants do not always provide pupils with an appropriate level of challenge.
- Sometimes teachers do not take enough opportunities to let pupils work on their own or with others for extended periods of time.
- The quality of teachers' marking in mathematics books does not always help to improve learning as well as it should because pupils do not regularly receive clear and specific guidance on how to improve their work.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have not addressed the inconsistencies in teaching and achievement quickly enough.
- The procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and achievement are not as systematic and detailed as they should be.
- The governing body is not as skilled as it should be in interpreting pupil progress information.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching and achievement is improving, particularly since the start of this year. Some teaching is good.
- Teaching and achievement in the Reception classes are consistently good.
- The achievement of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is improving.
- The vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning. Pupils behave well and are respectful to each other and adults.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted successfully.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which four were jointly observed with a senior leader. Members of the inspection team also made several short visits to lessons to check on the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils. Other meetings were held with governors, senior leaders and staff, including those responsible for leading subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors analysed 23 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), as well as responses to questionnaires from 41 staff. They also analysed responses to the school's own questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and the targets set for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at records relating to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority as well as a private consultant who works with the school.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Robert Arnold	Additional Inspector
Geoff Mason	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for whom the school receives additional funding through the Pupil Premium, is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary schools, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - all teachers accurately assess pupils' work
 - learning proceeds at a good pace in all lessons so that more pupils are able to make rapid progress
 - pupils are provided with more opportunities to work independently or with others without the direct guidance of the teacher
 - pupils are given clear guidance on how they can improve their work, particularly in mathematics
 - teachers use information about the progress that individual pupils are making in lessons to modify activities if they are finding the work too hard or too easy
 - teachers regularly require pupils to explain their thinking rather than accepting brief responses to questions
 - all teaching assistants provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - prioritising support for those teachers who are not accurately assessing pupils' work
 - making sure that the full range of monitoring information is used to evaluate how good teaching and achievement are at various points throughout the year and using this to set targets for further improvement.
- Improve governance so that the governing body is better able to influence improvements in teaching and achievement by:
 - ensuring that an appropriate number of governors are skilled in the interpretation of pupil achievement data
 - making sure that governors receive appropriately detailed information on the quality of teaching and achievement more frequently.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over the past two years, pupils have achieved average standards by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. Pupils who were assessed at the end of Year 2 in 2012 also achieved average standards in writing and mathematics but they achieved significantly lower than average in reading, even though this group of pupils began Year 1 with average skills and abilities. Over the past three years attainment at the end of Year 2 has been variable.
- Children usually join the Reception classes with skills and abilities which are below those typically found for children of this age. As a result of consistently good and sometimes better teaching children have consistently made good progress in the past three years. Consequently, they begin Year 1 with skills and abilities which are broadly average. The children in the Reception classes this year began school with skills and abilities well below those usually seen. However, the majority of children are making good progress though it is not quite as good in literacy as it is in other areas.
- Achievement across year groups and subjects is too variable because the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better. For example, in some classes pupils develop their writing skills at a good rate but in others the progress that they make is slower because teachers' assessments are not as precise as they should be.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similarly inconsistent progress across year groups and subjects. This is because teaching is not always fully matched to the needs of these pupils both in whole-class lessons and when they work with teaching assistants in small groups. However, some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress in reading.
- Since the start of this year, achievement has been improving at a faster rate than it has in recent years across all year groups and subjects.
- The school spends some of its additional pupil premium funding on additional staff to teach small group sessions as well as one-to-one personalised academic support. In 2012, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was approximately eight months behind their classmates in English and six months behind in mathematics. Although the progress that pupils are making is inconsistent, it is improving as a result of the additional help that pupils receive, and the gap between the achievement of this group of pupils and other pupils is narrowing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has been too variable for too long which is why achievement is not consistently good or better. However, the quality of teaching is improving this year.
- Some teachers are not accurately assessing pupils' work in order to pinpoint what they need to do to improve. This is a key reason why achievement is inconsistent. In addition, because assessments are not always accurate, teachers set tasks which are sometimes too easy or too hard for some pupils. This hinders pupils' progress, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Sometimes pupils do not learn as quickly as they should because some teachers spend too long providing introductions and explanations. In addition, teachers and teaching assistants do not always allow pupils to work on their own or with others for more extended periods of time without direct teacher guidance. This means that pupils cannot always develop their ability to think and structure their work for themselves.
- The quality of marking and the 'next steps' which are set for pupils are better in English than in mathematics. In English, pupils are clear about their targets for improvement and these are updated by teachers at appropriate points. However, pupils do not regularly get similar support and guidance through marking in mathematics and this means that marking in this subject does not have as much impact on achievement as it should.
- Many teaching assistants provide a good level of support for pupils and this helps them to focus

well on their learning. However, sometimes teaching assistants spend too long providing explanations to the small groups that they work with and this means learning time is lost. Some teaching assistants do not take every opportunity to challenge pupils, for example, through questioning.

- Some teachers do not always use questioning as well as they should. Often questions only require a short response from pupils and this does not help them to develop their thinking and understanding as well as it could if more extended responses were required.
- When teaching is good, teachers have a good level of subject knowledge which enables them to set work which is very well matched to the pupils' abilities. For example, in an effective Year 4 writing lesson, the vast majority of pupils made good progress because the work was just at the right level of difficulty to be challenging but achievable.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils overwhelmingly have good attitudes to learning and they are keen to work hard and always try their best. However, some pupils lose concentration when teachers' explanations and introductions are too long.
- Behaviour is good both in lessons and at break times. The positive relationships which exist in the school between pupils and staff support this good behaviour very well.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well and expectations are appropriately high. Pupils know that teachers insist on good behaviour and they are keen to demonstrate their willingness to meet the high standards required.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and well mannered and these qualities are consistently modelled by all adults.
- Pupils at all ages have a strong understanding of safety issues as a result of work they do in class. They understand how to minimise risk, for example, when using computers.
- Bullying is rare at the school and pupils feel safe at all times. Pupils have a good understanding of issues relating to bullying and they are aware of the different forms in which it can occur. They are well equipped with the skills required to manage bullying should it arise.
- Pupils' attendance is average. The number of pupils who do not attend school as regularly as they should has reduced significantly since last year.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Since the previous inspection in 2009, leaders and managers have not fully ensured that teaching is consistently good or better. Consequently, pupils' progress is inconsistent through both key stages and their attainment by Year 2 and Year 6 is no better than average. Leaders and managers are now having a much better impact on teaching and achievement, which is why they are improving. This is partly as a result of the success that they have had in securing a more stable and skilled staff team.
- Leaders and managers monitor teaching, the work in pupils' books and information about pupils' progress. However, they do not consistently and systematically make sure that they combine all this information together in order to make a robust and accurate evaluation of how good teaching and achievement are and so set targets for improvement at various points throughout the year. Staff value the support they receive through this monitoring work.
- Senior leaders are effective in ensuring there is no discrimination and that all pupils have equal opportunity to take part in all of the activities on offer.
- The subjects that pupils study have been developed well in recent years. For example, teachers have been appropriately trained to teach reading using a programme which pupils enjoy and value because they can see the progress that they are making very clearly. The 'creative curriculum' is made more exciting by a wide range of educational trips and visits which help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and skills well.

- All teachers are set targets to improve their teaching, and these targets guide decisions about pay increases. Staff receive appropriate training which enables them to work towards achieving their targets and so further improve their teaching and the achievement of pupils, though the impact has been variable.
- The school development plan mostly identifies the most important aspects of teaching and achievement which need further development and it is appropriately ambitious in its expectations for pupils' progress. However, it is not having as much impact on teaching and achievement as it could because the monitoring of progress towards the targets in the plan has not been as systematic and robust as it should have been.
- The local authority provides an appropriate level of support and challenge to the school. For example, last year it provided support from a national leader in education which helped the school to improve. The improvements which were identified have not, however, been consistently sustained since this support ended.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has not provided sufficient challenge to the school with respect to the inconsistencies in teaching and achievement. This is because governors are not trained as well as they should be to interpret pupil progress information and also because they have not ensured that they receive more frequent and detailed monitoring information.
 - Governors have a good understanding of how additional funding such as the pupil premium is used and the impact that this is having on improving achievement for eligible pupils. They are aware of how targets are set for teachers and how these guide decisions about pay increases. Governors provide a good level of challenge with respect to this.
 - Governors make sure that the school fulfils its responsibilities regarding safeguarding. All staff have been checked as required and are trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123730
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	402194

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	369
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire McSevney
Headteacher	Richard Culham
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 September 2009
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