

Birk Hill Infant and Nursery School

Chestnut Avenue, Eckington, Derbyshire S21 4BE

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not been quick enough to secure the improvements identified at the time of the last inspection. Their actions lack a sense of urgency.
- Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of the school. They do not assess the impact of their actions accurately enough and information regarding pupils' progress is unreliable.
- The governing body has not been rigorous enough in checking the performance of the school. They have taken too much at face value and not offered sufficient challenge to leaders.
- Safeguarding is effective but procedures and record-keeping are not as well developed as they could be.
- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent in the early years and key stage 1. Not all teachers are clear about pupils' next steps in learning.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high. Too often, pupils' misconceptions are overlooked.
- Pupils' attitudes to work are less than good where tasks are not well matched to their abilities. Too many pupils do not take pride in their work.
- Work in pupils' books shows that a significant number are not making the progress necessary to equip them well for the next stage of their education.
- Staff and parents lack clarity about the school's approach to education in the early years. Teaching and learning in the early years is not consistently good.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders effectively use the pupil premium and physical education funding to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils are confident and caring towards each other, and value the responsibilities that come with age. They behave well overall.
- The high priority given to reading ensures that pupils of all abilities are confident readers who use their phonics skills well.
- Subject leaders are increasingly well equipped to deliver school improvement in their areas of responsibility.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, thereby increasing the rates of progress for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, by:
 - raising teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the presentation of their work
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants identify and address pupils' misconceptions quickly and accurately, while modelling good practice for pupils to follow
 - ensuring that teachers are clear about what they intend pupils to learn in each lesson, and that they use the information about how well pupils are doing to determine more accurately the next steps in pupils' learning
 - making sure that the tasks teachers set consistently challenge pupils, regardless of their starting points
 - improving the quality of teachers' and teaching assistants' questioning so that it challenges pupils' thinking and deepens their understanding
 - allowing time for pupils to respond to, and practise, the next steps in learning that have been identified in teachers' feedback, as required by the school's assessment and marking policy.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that their attitudes to learning are consistently positive and they habitually take pride in their work.
- Improve provision in the early years by ensuring that:
 - teachers, teaching assistants and parents understand how early years education is delivered by the school, and the role they play in supporting each child's development
 - teaching and learning are of a consistently good or better standard
 - assessment practices accurately reflect children's abilities and inform clearly teachers' plans and activities for the next stages in each child's development.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by insisting that:
 - leaders and governors show greater urgency in addressing areas for improvement
 - leaders' and governors' plans for school improvement are much clearer about who is responsible for actions, when they will start and finish, the milestones to indicate if actions are on track for success and how the impact will be accurately assessed
 - leaders and governors improve and check more rigorously the systems and procedures for supporting pupils' welfare and keeping them safe
 - senior and subject leaders further improve the quality and accuracy of the school's assessment of pupils' progress in all subjects

- governors are more effective in checking on and challenging the information leaders give to them about the school's performance.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders and governors have not dealt quickly or effectively enough with the areas identified at the time of the last inspection. This is also the case where their own checks have revealed aspects of the school's performance that need attention. As a result, the school has not improved since the last inspection.
- Senior and subject leaders' plans lack the detail necessary to ensure that actions are carried out or have the expected impact on improving the school. Too often, the results of their actions are not analysed with enough rigour to identify what has been successful and what has not. This has contributed to leaders' overgenerous view of the school's performance.
- Senior and subject leaders, including in the early years, have not yet secured a reliable system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and attainment. The current system does not accurately or consistently reflect the standards of work in pupils' books, and masks the underperformance of some pupils during this year. This reduces leaders' abilities to plan effectively for school improvement and to hold, with certainty, teachers to account for pupils' outcomes.
- The temporary special educational needs coordinator, who is also the headteacher, has a good knowledge of the needs of individual pupils. Additional support is well planned and its impact reviewed regularly. Occasionally, the identification of pupils' special educational needs has been delayed as a result of unexpected changes in staff or the time taken to access external specialist support.
- Following the good judgement at the time of the last inspection, the local authority's support for the school has been minimal, in line with their practice for such schools. Leaders' lack of urgency in seeking support since the last inspection has limited the effectiveness of the local authority's involvement in securing school improvement.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics have a good understanding of their role in improving standards. They identify aspects of pupils' performance that are less strong and monitor the impact of their actions. For example, the curriculum has been adapted to include activities, such as jungle journeys to engage boys more in their learning and stimulate their writing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed at a level appropriate to their age. The school's theme-based curriculum is effective because pupils' learning experiences are enriched through the use of visitors or first-hand experiences. On 'cultural days', pupils use their learning passports to take imaginary trips to other countries, where they may be met by people and activities that provide a flavour of that place.

- Leaders make good use of the additional funding provided through the pupil premium. For example, additional learning support is well targeted through thoughtful provision planning. Disadvantaged pupils are supported through initiatives, such as uniform vouchers and subsidised access to before- and after-school clubs. This ensures that they make a good start to the school day and are involved in the wider aspects of school life.
- Leaders have used the physical education (PE) and sport funding particularly well. They have ensured that improving teachers' skills in delivering high-quality PE lessons has been prioritised, along with raising pupils' participation rates. The result has been additional after-school activity clubs, pupils' attendance at competitions at other schools and increased enthusiasm for more engaging PE lessons.

Governance

- Governors are not effective enough in holding senior and subject leaders to account for the school's performance. Their knowledge of the school is over-reliant on the information provided by the headteacher, which is sometimes lacking in detail, and they do not check this information with enough care. This has left governors having a patchy and overgenerous view of the school.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and every pupil. They use their range of backgrounds and experience in specific fields to support and supplement senior leaders' knowledge and skills. Minutes of governing body meetings show how their input has helped leaders to take important decisions on financial and staffing matters.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the importance of managing staff performance. They play an active part in ensuring that pay awards are only made when fully warranted.
- Governors know how the additional funding provided through the pupil premium and PE and sports grant has been used to improve pupils' outcomes. They are particularly knowledgeable about the PE grant and its impact on staff training and raising pupils' participation rates in after-school activities and competitions. They ensure that the pupil premium is used to support the social, emotional and physical needs of disadvantaged pupils, as well as improving their academic achievements.
- Despite their effectiveness in some aspects of their work, an external review of governance is appropriate because currently governors ineffectively challenge the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because staff know the pupils and their families well, and there is an evident culture of care towards, and between, pupils.
- However, senior leaders and governors are not as meticulous as they could be in their checking and analysis of documents relating to children's safeguarding and welfare. Some records are not completed to the highest standards and, while all staff receive regular training in child protection matters, leaders and governors do not check or reinforce this training with enough rigour.

- Teachers, teaching assistants and other school staff, including those in the before-school club, are able to describe the signs of and symptoms of abuse. They are vigilant to the risks of extreme views and know what to do if they have a concern about a child, or member of staff, and to whom they should take their concerns.
- Almost all the parents whom inspectors spoke with explained how they feel their children are safe and that school staff would act quickly and appropriately if there were any concerns about a pupil's welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' and teaching assistants' expectations of what pupils can achieve are inconsistent. Too often, poor presentation of pupils' work is accepted and goes unchallenged. Teachers do not consistently follow the school's policy when marking pupils' work. Some do not show the required attention to detail which means that misconceptions are not addressed and errors recur over time, slowing down the progress pupils make.
- Not all teachers are proficient in assessing what pupils can do or the next steps in their learning. Tasks are not consistently well matched to pupils' abilities or starting points, resulting in some work being too hard and some too easy. Where this happens, pupils lose interest and become disengaged in their learning, slowing their progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are not all adept at extending pupils' understanding through thoughtful questioning. They miss opportunities to encourage pupils to explain what they have done, and why. Pupils do not have enough chances to develop and deepen their learning as a result.
- Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners who are eager to please and respond well when learning tasks are well matched to their needs. Where progress is strongest, teachers respond promptly to pupils' learning and adapt lessons, accordingly. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher was swift to identify pupils whose skills at using arrays as a tool to support multiplication were established. She moved these pupils on quickly to more challenging work and encouraged them to support each other's learning to further deepen their understanding.
- Teachers place a high priority on the teaching of reading skills. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver phonics sessions accurately and this is reflected in pupils' ability and willingness to attempt new and unfamiliar words. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly at home and are well supported by their families in this respect.
- Pupils write regularly and, by the time they reach Year 2, they write for extended periods and across the curriculum. In the Year 1/2 class, pupils' writing is particularly competent and engaging. Their writing improves quickly because the pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and the teacher pays close attention to securing those improvements.
- Teachers are increasingly consistent in their teaching of mathematics, and calculation strategies in particular. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to use and apply their learning to solve problems and, where these are well matched to ability, they support progress. Where teachers and teaching assistants have begun to introduce reasoning skills into lessons, some older pupils can explain their methods and ideas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement because some of the records relating to pupils' welfare are not as thorough as they could be.
- Pupils' books show they do not consistently show pride in their work. Pupils' attitudes to learning are not positive where teaching does not inspire their interest or is not well matched to their ability.
- By the time they reach Year 2, pupils are confident, inquisitive learners. They show respect for adults, including those who are unfamiliar to them. Pupils show a strong sense of care towards each other and relish taking on responsibility. For example, high numbers of applications for the role of sound engineer in assemblies mean that the role is heavily oversubscribed and pupils take turns.
- Pupils are taught about and encouraged to show the fundamental British values of tolerance, care and charitable giving. Members of the school council are elected through a democratic vote, and minutes of their meetings show that their views are used by leaders to improve the school. For example, their suggested strategies to encourage better attendance through class and individual rewards are now in regular use.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe in different situations, such as when using the internet or crossing the road. They know whom to turn to if they are upset or worried about something.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good overall. Pupils are polite and courteous, conducting themselves well at different times of the school day, for example in the dining hall. The vast majority of pupils respond quickly and appropriately to adults' instructions.
- There is compelling evidence to show that leaders have taken all reasonable steps to increase attendance, which has been below the national average for primary schools for a number of years. Initiatives include the recognition of good attendance in newsletters and assemblies. Incentives for pupils, such as the chance of winning a bicycle, have been successful in reducing absence, as have the fines issued to some parents for their children's unauthorised absences. Although still below the national average, attendance has improved during this year.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils' outcomes are not consistently good. Variable quality of teaching and learning means that too many pupils, particularly in Year 1, are not making the progress of which they are capable. Consequently, these pupils are unlikely to be well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- The most able and the least able pupils' progress is affected by the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. Where the level of challenge is not appropriate to pupils' learning needs, their progress slows and they do not currently attain as well as they should. The school's pupils' progress tracking information is not sufficiently accurate or well used by staff. The targets set for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics do not stand up to scrutiny well enough, with some being too low and others unattainable. The tracking of pupils' outcomes in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics is underdeveloped.
- Published performance information shows that, in previous years, pupils have made improved progress during their time in key stage 1. As a result, the proportions attaining at the standard expected for their age, and at greater depth, were higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016. This reflected a significant acceleration in their progress during Year 2.
- Outcomes in the Year 1 national phonics screening check showed a significant decline in 2015. However, leaders responded to this with a programme of staff development and a review of how phonics was taught. These actions were successful in lifting standards in phonics to a level above that seen nationally in 2016.
- In reading and writing particularly, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils attaining at the standard expected by the end of Year 2 was broadly in line with the national average in 2016. Few disadvantaged pupils showed the accelerated progress necessary to attain at greater depth. However, disadvantaged pupils generally make progress that is at least as strong as other pupils' and this is helping to diminish the differences in attainment between the two groups, over time.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. They benefit from well-targeted adult support and provision that is matched to their individual needs. Consequently, the additional funds provided to support their learning are used effectively.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not been successful in fully implementing the changes to the school's early years provision, initiated at the start of this academic year. The principles and practice are not yet applied by all members of staff and this has reduced the effectiveness of the provision, particularly on the progress of the Nursery children. In addition, parents told inspectors that they do not understand the changes in practice, or the impact these might have on how their children learn.
- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good in the early years. Many of the youngest children are not yet sufficiently immersed in the routines necessary to support effective learning. Too often, the older children are not clear about the purpose of activities and they flit between activities without achieving the intended learning.

- Teachers do not yet use the school's assessment systems to their fullest effect. Teachers and teaching assistants do not record developmental milestones well enough in children's learning journey records, and there is little evidence of parental involvement in these. Consequently, the accuracy of the tracking information is not as secure as it needs to be to accurately assess children's achievements and inform their next steps in learning.
- The early years leader is very new to post. She has a clear vision of high-quality provision, using the experiences of her team and the expertise of other practitioners, to assess the strengths of the early years provision. She has accurately identified the aspects in need of improvement and set about addressing these, quickly gaining the trust of parents along the way.
- Children's relationships with adults are well established and this supports their development and well-being. The children are punctual and eager to learn. They work and play well together, often displaying exemplary behaviour. In the outdoor area, a group of children collaborated to make a shelter using plastic tubes, solving problems as a team as they went along.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in promoting early reading skills. Phonics teaching is well matched to children's abilities and adults are quick to challenge mispronunciation of pure sounds.
- Work in the learning books in the Reception class show that many children have made good progress throughout the year. Their writing skills have developed and some write for extended periods, engaging the reader with their recounts of recent events. Their recording of mathematical ideas and number is improving and this is endorsed through photographic evidence of their achievements.
- Children enter the Nursery class at stages of development that are broadly typical for their age. By the time they leave the Reception Year, the proportion achieving a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average over the last three years.
- Current assessment information suggests that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is likely to be slightly above the national average. First-hand evidence, drawn from observations of children engaged in activities and from their learning journals, supports the inspectors' judgement that this prediction may be overoptimistic.
- Statutory duties are met and safeguarding is effective, although the lack of attention to detail in some recording seen in the rest of the school is also applicable to the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	112543
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10031270

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant and Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Jones
Headteacher	Sue Birch
Telephone number	01246 433 205
Website	www.birkhill.derbyshire.sch.uk
Email address	info@birkhill.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 April–1 May 2013

Information about this school

- Birk Hill Infant and Nursery School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- In recent years, there have been relatively high levels of changes in staff, the majority of which could not have been foreseen by leaders. At the time of the inspection, the early years leader had been in post for less than three weeks and the school's assistant headteacher was about to take up a post elsewhere. Two members of staff were on maternity leave. The school's headteacher is an associate local authority adviser and the temporary special educational needs coordinator.
- Key stage 1 pupils are taught in three classes, one of which is mixed age. Children in the Reception class attend full time and are taught alongside Nursery children in the same classrooms, which have been designated as a foundation stage unit. Nursery children attend part time.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are few pupils who speak English as an additional language.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is just below the national average, having almost doubled over the last three years.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is half the national average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a number of lessons, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. They observed the teaching of early reading skills and pupils were heard to read. The inspectors also talked with pupils about their school and looked at examples of pupils' work in all year groups to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time. An inspector also visited the before-school club.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject and middle leaders, and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors also spoke to the school's local authority link adviser and a senior adviser.
- The inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of each school day. They considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school's own self-evaluation and plans for improvement; the school's most recent information on the achievement and progress of pupils; information relating to the health, safety and safeguarding of pupils; the school's most recent data relating to the attendance of pupils and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.

Inspection team

Stephen McMullan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Lyn-Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Jeannie Haigh	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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