



Smithy Bridge Foundation Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105847
LEA Rochdale
Inspection number 277425
Inspection dates 3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr James Kidd CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bridgenorth Drive
School category	Foundation		Smithy Bridge
Age range of pupils	3 to 11		Littleborough, Lancashire OL15 0DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01706 378083
Number on roll	470	Fax number	01706 376960
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs C Bennett
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mrs J George

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school serving a mixed area. Consequently, pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the proportion who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below average. Very few pupils have statements of special educational need. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage and there is a small number from minority ethnic groups. The school has Investors in People status and holds the Healthy Schools 4 Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it is a good school with some outstanding features. These include exceptional Foundation Stage provision, pupils' excellent personal development, and high-quality arrangements for their care, support and guidance. All pupils are fully included in what the school has to offer and their contribution to the life of the school is valued. Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress through the school and achieve particularly well in the Foundation Stage. The school is now looking to extend liaison between this area and Key Stage 1 in order to share further the impressive practice which exists. Standards by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average. Although satisfactory, achievement in science has not made the same progress as that in English and mathematics. Teaching and learning are good and the school's support for able pupils is a strong feature. Assessment is good but pupils are not always fully aware of their performance and of how to reach the next level. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is enriched by a wide range of musical activities, an extensive programme of extra-curricular events and French in Year 6.

The school is led and managed well. Leadership demonstrates clear educational direction and acts swiftly and effectively to address issues for development. For example, standards in writing have improved markedly as a result of the school's decisive action. The school's evaluation of its performance is entirely accurate and it has made good improvement since the last inspection. It has the capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

The school has already identified that, in order to build upon its strengths and improve provision, it should:

- ensure that all pupils are fully aware of how they are performing and what they need to do to improve their standards
- ensure that pupils' achievement in science matches that in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's evaluation of above average standards and good achievement at the end of Years 2 and 6 is accurate. From a broadly average starting point on entry to the Nursery, children make rapid progress in the Foundation Stage. Here, they receive a strong basis upon which to develop future learning and social development. Most children are on course to attain and, in many cases, exceed the goals expected for their age at the end of the Reception year. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make good progress overall, respond positively to challenging targets set for them and achieve well in English, mathematics and most other subjects. Achievement in science is satisfactory but pupils could do better. There has been a marked improvement in

standards of writing as a result of the school's timely introduction of relevant strategies to address this, for example, the able writers' initiative in Year 1. Over time, there is no underachievement by any group of pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do as well as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school, attendance is well above average and punctuality is impressive. Pupils are courteous and polite and are pleased to welcome visitors to their school. One pupil exclaimed, 'Do you like our school? We do and we like to show people round it!' Youngsters behave in a very mature fashion and have a positive attitude towards their work. This is because the school encourages them to take responsibility for their own actions and to look after each other. Pupils have clear views about their school, which members of the school council express with great confidence. 'Playground pals' and 'special friends' are just two examples of the generosity of spirit which characterises the whole school community. Healthy eating, regular exercise and care for the environment are integral to the school's comprehensive and very well planned personal, social and health education and citizenship programme. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional and the vibrant displays, thought-provoking assemblies and extensive musical activities ensure that pupils in all years have a keen awareness of their own and others' cultures and traditions. Pupils' future economic well-being is fostered by the emphasis that is placed on them all achieving well in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with some outstanding practice. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is excellent and comprises active and enjoyable learning, with children encouraged to take responsibility right from the start. In the main school, the best teaching is comprehensively planned to meet the needs of different abilities, engages the interests of the pupils and challenges them to think for themselves. In an outstanding Year 2 dance lesson, for example, pupils were beside themselves with delight when asked to move like tadpoles to music and they made quite perceptive comments about the performance of their classmates. Similarly, high levels of achievement were promoted in a Year 1 able writers session by challenging questions from the teacher, who asked the pupils to use their imagination to think about how they could write about The Castle Escape.

Assessment practice is good overall and any underachievement is identified quickly and accurately. Marking is comprehensive and pupils benefit from detailed comments about how they might improve their work. The school recognises, however, that pupils are not always fully aware of their progress towards the next National Curriculum level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. There is careful balance between basic skills and other subjects. Pupils are prepared well for the world of work whilst fully understanding the value of other learning. This is apparent in how they appreciate life in other times and cultures, and their focus on their own healthy lifestyles. There are detailed plans to make sure that topics are covered in the ways that best suit pupils' needs and interests. The school has appreciated the need to adapt what is offered in Year 1 to better match pupils' experience in the Foundation Stage, where the curriculum is highly impressive. A valuable initiative has been specialist French teaching for Year 6 pupils. Music provision is outstanding, with specialist singing lessons from Year 3 upwards and extensive instrumental tuition. The school is going to great lengths to provide the recommended physical education curriculum, but efforts are hampered by significant limitations in the accommodation.

Pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well provided for and there is a clear and increasing focus on what is required to meet the needs of more able pupils. A wide range of clubs, activities, visits out and visitors to school enrich pupils' enjoyment and achievement and are valued by all.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care shown by the school to its pupils is outstanding and lies at the very heart of its ethos. It provides a safe and caring environment. This is a school where each individual matters and where teamwork and support for others is of the essence. Pupils' views are sought through the school council and they believe their opinions are valued. As one pupil wrote in a rap poem when applying to become a school councillor:

'I love to go to Brownies and I like to dance

And I want to be a councillor, if you'll give me a chance.

If you've got a problem, you can come to me.

And I'd get it sorted. You can count on me!'

All staff are committed to ensuring that pupils' welfare is safeguarded. Strategies to support vulnerable pupils are very effective; pupils experiencing difficulty are identified rapidly and given sensitive support. Induction procedures for Foundation Stage children are comprehensive and provide valuable guidance for families new to the school. Child Protection procedures are rigorous and health and safety issues are well understood by staff, parents and pupils. The school has positive working relationships with a wide range of outside agencies. A key feature of care in school is the outstanding support of the teaching assistants who give effective guidance to all pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. In the two terms since her appointment, the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and staff, has organised a very thorough school review. This has given even more energy and focus to an already hardworking and committed team, and teachers are thriving on the level of challenge. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is excellent. The vision for the school's future direction is crystal clear and agreed. Subject coordinators appreciate how their views have been sought and incorporated in planning. Aims and priorities are carefully laid out in the development plan. This thorough and very accessible document would benefit in parts from more precise ways of judging the extent to which aims have been achieved. Monitoring of lessons is regular and perceptive. The high priority given to developing all staff to further improve the learning opportunities for pupils is clearly reflected in the school's Investor in People status. .

Finances are carefully managed and thoughtfully used. The school is well resourced and staff, including support assistants, are very well deployed. A number of improvements to the accommodation have recently been made. Governors are well informed and fulfil their responsibilities well. They not only celebrate what the school does well but also ask the questions needed to stimulate more progress. Standards continue to rise and there is the capacity for further improvement. Value for money is good.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all so much for being so kind, polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time in Smithy Bridge and would like to tell you what we think about your school.

What we like most

- We are pleased that you are so proud of your school, behave really well, work very hard in lessons and look after each other. We also like the marvellous way you get on with each other and with all the adults who work in the school.
- We think your teachers and teaching assistants look after you very well and give you many useful things to do to help in running the school.
- We believe that the school council and playground friends do a lot to make everyone feel happy.
- We are delighted that you are taught well and that you make good progress in your lessons. We know that you enjoy the wonderful musical activities and that you have many opportunities to join clubs and visit interesting places.
- We know that your headteacher and all the other staff know how to make your school even better!

What we have asked your school to do now

- We know that your teachers mark your work really well but we think that they should sometimes give you a little more advice about how you can improve and how you can do even better, for example, in science.

We enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We wish you well for the future.