



Berkswich CofE (VC) Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124234
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281666
Inspection dates 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005
Reporting inspector Tony Dobell RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Cedar Way
School category	Voluntary controlled		Walton-on-the-Hill
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 0LU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 354600
Number on roll	233	Fax number	01785 354600
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Colin Jones
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr Martin Holmes

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school draws its pupils from both the immediate locality and a wider area because their parents choose this school. Children start in Reception with typically average levels of knowledge, understanding and learning skills, but with strengths in numeracy. Most pupils are from White Western-European backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Berkswich is an outstanding school giving very good value for money. It judges its own effectiveness generally in line with inspection findings, but in some respects too modestly. Across the school, pupils achieve very well and reach standards that are well above average by the end of Year 6. The quality of teaching is outstanding and pupils benefit from many very interesting and stimulating learning activities. The school has a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and its outstanding curriculum is accessible to all pupils. Pupils benefit from very high levels of care and they and their parents are rightly proud of their school.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is fully supported in realising his vision for the school by his deputy and all colleagues. They rightly recognise that the new computer suite gives the school an opportunity to raise pupils' information and communication technology skills further and to widen opportunities for them to work independently.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make full use of the school's new computer suite to widen pupils' information and communication technology skills so that they use these skills more to support their learning in other subjects.
- Help pupils to develop the skills of independent learning by having more opportunities to organise their own work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children achieve very well in the Reception class and make very good progress. They exceed the level expected for their age by the time they move to Year 1. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 make outstanding progress and the 2004 National Curriculum tests show that, in Year 2, pupils reached well above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In the same year, pupils in Year 6 reached high standards in English and mathematics and these results placed the school in the top 5% of all primary schools. When year groups occasionally do not reach these very high standards, for example, in the Year 2 tests in the summer of 2005, this is due to factors associated with that particular group of pupils, such as disruptions in their learning.

Standards in speaking and listening are well above average. Most pupils listen attentively and express themselves clearly and precisely. They read fluently and, by Year 6, writing is mostly accurate and imaginative. Standards in mathematics are well above average by Year 6, and opportunities for investigative and experimental work result in high levels of understanding in science. Standards in information and communication technology have improved well since the last inspection and are now above the level expected by the time that pupils leave the school. However, information and communication technology is not used as widely as it could be to support learning in other subjects. The school successfully enables all groups of pupils to achieve very

well. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve very well because their needs are responded to expertly by staff and their learning is very carefully assessed and managed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn the value of prayer and reflection in lively assemblies and have a crystal clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They know how to keep themselves safe and applaud the school's move towards exercise and healthy eating. One pupil told inspectors that 'the old unhealthy food wasn't so nice anyway'. Pupils enjoy responsibilities and carry them out diligently, looking after each other cheerfully and courteously. However, they are not so aware that the skills that they are learning, for example, in literacy and numeracy, are crucial for their future careers. They have a very good awareness of different cultures and are committed to racial equality. A pupil told inspectors that they are happy to welcome all new pupils who join the school and they are pleased to be able to support a school in the Punjab.

Pupils enjoy school so much that attendance rates are well above average. They join in a wide range of activities enthusiastically and stress that lessons are always 'fun and exciting'. Behaviour is excellent in most lessons and at play, and pupils are appalled at the idea of bullying in their school – 'there is absolutely none'. Parents acknowledge that very rare instances are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school council has a strong voice in school decision making and pupils appreciate that their ideas are valued. Their maturity and confidence are quite exceptional.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching is outstanding. An analysis of pupils' previous work from this year and last year shows that they benefit from stimulating and imaginative learning tasks, which fully engage their concentration. Throughout the school, teachers challenge pupils to give of their best and to think precisely. In lessons, they mostly work with high levels of interest and concentration and so achieve very well. For example, in a music lesson in Year 2, pupils were totally engaged and excited by the imaginative activity and worked with real enthusiasm. Similarly, in English and mathematics lessons in Year 6, a brisk pace and challenging teaching enabled pupils at different stages of learning to achieve exceptionally well. Excellent relationships in most lessons underpin highly effective learning. Learning activities are carefully targeted so that pupils at different stages of learning make progress from their current levels of understanding. The school has very effective systems for assessing standards and progress, and uses this information successfully to plan pupils' further learning.

Pupils' learning is managed very effectively and targets are used very well to help pupils to achieve.

Pupils' specific difficulties are identified early and they are given support to successfully overcome these. Highly effective support by teachers and teaching assistants helps them to make very good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning through the exceptional range of experiences and activities provided. They do not think of their learning as work. Very strong links between subjects increase pupils' depth of understanding. For example, two days were recently devoted to studying the ancient Egyptians and age groups were mixed as pupils went from one activity to the next, learning from a range of different experiences. One parent wrote that this was her daughter's best ever learning experience.

The curriculum is very well matched to the needs and interests of all pupils. The emphasis is on the learning of skills and on pupils using these to extend their learning across different subjects. For example, literacy skills are very well developed in history, science and religious education while numeracy is practised in science, geography and design and technology. There is scope for information and communication technology skills to be used more widely to support learning. Excellent support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities enables them to have full access to the curriculum. Highly effective social and health education activities enable pupils to grow in maturity and confidence. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to manage their own learning and to develop skills as independent learners.

There are excellent opportunities for enrichment outside lessons. Pupils value these and appreciate the expertise lying behind their organisation. For example, one pupil said of a teacher in one activity: 'she's a very good athlete you know'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding level of care shown by everyone in school makes pupils feel safe and secure, and contributes significantly to the confidence with which they approach learning. There are first class arrangements for child protection and pupils are well known to all adults and valued for what they can offer. Excellent relationships mean that pupils throughout the school are confident to approach adults with any problem. Very effective systems of support and guidance underpin all pupils' progress and enable targets to be set for their future progress. These systems help all pupils to achieve highly. Parents greatly appreciate the very high levels of care provided by the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Parents and pupils appreciate the headteacher's frequent and reassuring presence around the school. The headteacher knows all the pupils and is fully committed to their progress and well-being. He values them all and, together with all staff, helps them to develop into confident and caring young people. The headteacher is very ably supported by his highly effective deputy who has very good interpersonal skills and draws well on staff strengths in the drive for sustaining high standards. There is a clear unity of purpose among all staff, who are passionately committed to identifying and tackling any perceived relative weakness, for example, in writing, to enable all pupils to reach their potential. Subjects are managed very effectively. Skilful and sensitive management of the Foundation Stage enables children in the Reception class to make a very good start in their education. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is managed very effectively so that they are fully included in learning and achieve very well.

The school has an innovative approach to strategic planning so that its development is managed very effectively. Very good monitoring of teaching and learning, both formally and informally, helps to achieve this. Governors are an important part of the team. They have an excellent appreciation of the school's strengths and potential for development and are very effective in their role as 'critical friend'. They manage resources and finances very well and have a very clear understanding of the principles of best value.

Highly effective leadership and management have enabled the school to improve well since its last inspection. It has a very good capacity to improve further.

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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?	1	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	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?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	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	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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

Berkswich Church of England (VC) Primary School Cedar Way Walton-on-the Hill Stafford ST17 0LU

November 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for welcoming us into your school, being so friendly and polite to us, and talking to us about your learning and your lives in the school. We think that your school is outstanding in many ways:

- you are cared for outstandingly well by all adults who work in the school and you feel confident and happy
- your teachers work very hard to make your learning interesting and to help you to make very good and, sometimes, outstanding progress
- you are all treated equally and valued for what you can do
- relationships are generally excellent, you support each other very well and you are rarely absent
- you know that it is important to exercise and to eat healthy food
- your headteacher and deputy headteacher are super and are planning to make the school even better.

All these things mean that you grow into confident young people, happy to say what you think both in class and in assemblies.

We think that two things would improve your school further:

- the new computer suite is an opportunity for you to use your information and communication technology skills even more in your learning
- you could be given more chances to organise your own learning.

We enjoyed our two days in your school very much and wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Mr A J Dobell Lead inspector