



# Birchwood Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124681  
**LEA** SUFFOLK LEA  
**Inspection number** 281780  
**Inspection dates** 14 November 2005 to 15 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Ms. Cheryl Thompson LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Valiant Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		IP5 3SP
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01473610701
<b>Number on roll</b>	182	<b>Fax number</b>	01473 636645
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs. Ruth Steggles
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 May 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs. Jacqui Frost

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 14 November 2005 - 15 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281780
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Birchwood Primary serves a relatively advantaged area and has 182 pupils on roll. There is a small number of pupils from ethnic minority families but the great majority are white British. Attainment on entry is above average. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals or who have learning difficulties are both below average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Birchwood is a rapidly improving school which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils feel happy and safe, confident that all adults care for them. There has been a history of underachievement, especially in English, but the school dramatically improved standards in Year 6 in 2005 tests and they were well above average. However, standards of English are not as high as they could be in the present Year 6. In Year 2, standards were average and achievement is just beginning to be satisfactory. Standards by the end of the reception class are above average and the provision for these children is satisfactory. Across the school, standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are unsatisfactory. The school views itself as good. Inspectors agree that there has been impressive improvement in standards and achievement since January 2005. However, pupils' achievement needs to be better, especially in Years 1 and 2, to warrant the judgement of 'good'. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory but the school is not providing enough opportunities for pupils to learn about how to improve their work and about different cultures. Leadership and management are good and a key strength of the school. Issues raised by the inspection in 2000 have only been tackled since January 2005. Within this short time, there has been good improvement, evidenced by higher standards and sharp reduction of the halting of underachievement. Parents really appreciate the much improved opportunities to become involved in their child's education. The capacity for further improvement is very good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve pupils' achievement, especially in Years 1 and 2 - raise standards further in English and ICT - develop teachers' use of marking so that pupils understand effectively how to improve their work - ensure pupils are given opportunities to develop an awareness of cultures other than their own

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Year 6 standards in 2005 national tests were well above average overall and the highest they have been in the past five years. The challenging targets set by the headteacher in January 2005 have been met. On balance, compared to their test results in Year 2, these pupils achieved satisfactorily. Evidence from the 2005 tests and in pupils' current work shows the school has successfully halted the previous decline in standards. The legacy of underachievement by older pupils is being dealt with effectively. Except in English where standards could be higher by Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. Year 2 standards in 2005 also improved and are broadly average. Given their above average starting points, there has been a history of pupils not making enough progress in Years 1 and 2. However, very close monitoring by the headteacher, resulting in better teaching and use of assessment, has ensured pupils are now making satisfactory progress. Standards in

ICT are below expectations across the school. However, good teaching and extra time allocation to the subject are helping pupils to catch up at a good rate.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development and well being are satisfactory. They attend school regularly because they like being there, feel safe and enjoy learning. Almost all are punctual but a few are persistently late. Behaviour is good and pupils respond positively in lessons. Older pupils enjoy being 'guardian angels' for the younger pupils. Pupils' social development and moral development is good. The newly formed school council is planning to raise money for Children in Need. The council is providing good opportunities for pupils to have their say about how the school might change which helps them develop skills needed in later life. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community. Pupils are encouraged to lead safe and healthy lives because of effective guidance from staff. Satisfactory development of key skills is contributing to pupils future economic well-being. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory overall. Whilst pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong and well-developed social skills, their understanding of cultures other than their own is underdeveloped.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with good teaching in Years 6 and 4. In the Foundation Stage, improved planning is just beginning to move pupils on at a better rate. Where teaching is good, teachers set very high expectations and will not accept mediocrity. In some lessons, more able pupils are not always stretched and the pace of lessons is too slow. Pupils with learning difficulties have appropriate learning plans and support from teaching assistants. Since January 2005, teaching and learning have improved, especially in English now that the National Literacy Strategy has been introduced. Though satisfactory, teachers' knowledge and confidence in teaching the reading of letter sounds are not yet secure. Most teachers have an adequate understanding of pupils' attainment. Currently, not all teachers are making the most profitable use of this information to ensure pupils work to capacity and make maximum progress. The overwhelming majority of parents are delighted with the changes made after they were consulted in February 2005. They value the regular opportunities to discuss their children's progress with school staff.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. It includes French and a good range of out-of-lesson activities and residential visits which provide opportunities for pupils to work in teams

and develop initiative. The school is well known for the high standards it achieves in art. However, until very recently, less prominence was given to ICT. To raise standards and achievement in ICT, extra time has been allocated to teaching the key skills in the subject. There is good provision for pupils to learn to be safe, for example, cycle proficiency lessons help pupils learn road safety and 'Crucial Crew' ensures pupils know how to react to 'stranger danger'. Healthy eating is taught well in science topics and reinforced by the school promoting healthy eating snacks at break times.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school has good systems for ensuring the safety and well being of its pupils. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are fully in place. All illnesses and accidents are properly logged and staff know how to record any concerns. The school liaises very well with other agencies and seeks advice whenever necessary. Systems to inform pupils about how well they are doing and how they can improve, though relatively new, are satisfactory. Pupils have their own targets for improvement which are also shared with parents. Where this system is less successful is in teachers' marking. Currently, teachers' marking is inadequate and gives pupils little idea of how to improve their work and no mention is made of targets. Parents of children with learning difficulties are generally kept well informed about their progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. School development planning is very good because it is based on an extremely clear picture of the school's strengths and many important areas to improve. The issues raised by this inspection are already high priority within this plan. The headteacher has united the staff who all share a tenacious commitment to improve. She has chosen her managers carefully and supports them skilfully. Consequently, management is developing well and having a good impact on the school's rapid improvement. The teacher leading improvement in English is doing a very good job, evidenced by the much higher standards in 2005 tests. The headteacher has a good understanding of the quality of teaching. Through newly-introduced professional interviews, teachers are guided to improve their practice and are held accountable for improving pupils' standards. Parents' and pupils' views are sought and acted upon. As a result, parents now feel more involved in their child's education. A school council has been established and pupils are thriving on the opportunities to take decisions and put forward their views. Areas such as ICT, writing, governors' and parental involvement were identified by the last inspection as requiring improvement. Very little had been done to address these issues until January 2005. Since then, there has been rapid improvement although it is recognised that more needs to be done in ICT and writing. Governors remain supportive of the school and now have a much better understanding of its strengths and areas to improve. Governors are satisfactorily involved in evaluating ways to develop the quality of education. In recent months the

school and governors have used self evaluation activities effectively. The capacity to improve is very 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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	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	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. We enjoyed talking to you about what you like doing in school. We were impressed with how well you behave in lessons and at playtimes. We thought you work quite hard in lessons but felt that sometimes you could try a bit harder to improve your work or do more. You told us that you enjoy your lessons but you would like to know more about how you are getting on. We agree with you and think that your teachers could tell you this more clearly when they mark your work. You like your clubs and residential visits. You told us that you feel adults look after you well. We noticed that all the adults in the school make sure you are safe. Your headteacher and class teachers are doing a great job improving things in the school and making sure that you are doing as well as you can. We have asked her to do a few things to make your school even better. We have asked her to continue to make sure you do as well as possible, especially in English. Also, we have asked her to help you get better at information and communication technology (ICT) and make up for all the work you have missed. We would also like the school to help you learn about more about people's different beliefs and how these influence the way they lead their lives. We hope your fund raising activities for 'Children in Need' goes well.