



Birkby Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107626
LEA Kirklees
Inspection number 283020
Inspection dates 15 November 2005 to 16 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Sonja Oyen HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Mead Street
School category	Community		Fartown
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD1 6HE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01484 223975
Number on roll	303	Fax number	01484 223977
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Keith Anglesey
Date of previous inspection	10 March 2003	Headteacher	Mrs Susan Davies

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Introduction

In March 2003, an inspection judged the school to require special measures. Her Majesty's Inspectors have visited the school each term to judge the progress made in dealing with the key issues. This inspection was carried out by one HMI and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Birkby Junior School is in Fartown to the north of Huddersfield, an area of social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Most of the 266 pupils are from minority ethnic groups; 60% of the pupils have Pakistani heritage. The school has a growing number of pupils from African countries. Eight pupils are seeking asylum. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school during the school year. There are also pupils who are absent for long periods because their families are visiting relatives abroad. Just over half of the pupils have English as an additional language; eleven different languages are spoken. A significant number of pupils join the school with limited or no spoken English. As in other local schools, the number on roll has fallen in recent years. There are two classes of pupils in Years 3 and 4 and three classes for Years 5 and 6. Seventy-one pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and two pupils have a statement of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Birkby Junior School is a happy, caring school that is on the up. It has improved markedly since the inspection in March 2003 and, as the school rightly judged itself, is now providing a satisfactory education and satisfactory value for money. The pupils and staff are optimistic and confident; they have set their sights on making Birkby even better. After a long period of limited progress, there has been a remarkable turn about. Pupils and parents value the improved partnership with them and very good range of things on offer. The school is inviting, very orderly and calm. It is a model of racial harmony; the pupils respect one another, get on well together and generally behave well. They have their say and play a prominent role in the running of the school. The teaching has strengthened and is satisfactory overall with many aspects of good practice. The pupils are willing learners and try hard, especially when given interesting things to do in lessons, clubs and extra sessions run by support staff. The school's success in creating a very positive spirit is not yet mirrored in its academic standards, which remain low. This is mainly because the pupils have much to catch up, but also because the pupils are not always aware of how to do better. Also, the majority of pupils have gaps in their skills in using English, despite many making good progress in learning to understand and speak it. The school has sound plans to raise standards but has not pinpointed the exact weaknesses in the pupils' skills and knowledge. There is good capacity to improve because of the strong, determined leadership of the headteacher, the shared commitment, expertise and initiative of governors, teaching and support staff, and the proven skills of key managers in bringing about change.

What the school should do to improve further

In order to raise standards and accelerate the pupils' progress, the school should:

- enrich the pupils' listening and speaking skills
- strengthen the quality of teaching and learning especially in using feedback to help the pupils improve their performance
- sharpen the analysis of information from monitoring the school's performance and ensure that key managers know exactly where to focus their efforts to raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are low but the majority of the pupils are starting to achieve satisfactorily given their often low start. Questionnaire responses show that nearly all parents felt their children were making good progress. Over the last two years, there has been little improvement in the school's results in the national tests and the school has not met its targets. A slight improvement in mathematics in 2005 was not matched in

English and science. Although many pupils made good progress in Year 6 across the curriculum, they did not catch up enough to match the level expected for their age. Only a handful of pupils did better than this. The school did well in lifting the work of the lower attaining pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who were in the early stages of learning to speak English, but did not do enough to push others, especially the more able. This was true also for some other year groups.

The pupils' attainment on entry to Year 3 is not as strong as their results at the end of Year 2 suggest and the overall profile is below average. Strong teaching has enabled the majority of Year 3 pupils to make good gains since September. In other year groups the picture is mixed although achievement in lessons was generally satisfactory. Standards have risen in handwriting and spelling but the gaps in the pupils' oral language skills limit the quality of what they write. These gaps, especially in understanding idiomatic language, constrain their understanding of what they read. In mathematics, many pupils find it hard to recall key number facts and to decide how to solve a problem. In information and communication technology and physical education, standards are satisfactory. When working with coaches and specialists, the quality of the pupils' performance is often good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school that the pupils' personal development and well-being are nurtured well and are good overall. The pupils are thriving as a result of the interest, time and effort invested in them by all the adults. Pupils from different ethnic groups get on extremely well together and respect each other's cultures. Pupils in Year 3 relished counting in Swahili.

The pupils' motivation, behaviour and attendance have improved significantly over the last two years. Older pupils said that this was because school is 'fun, exciting' and 'there is lots to do'. The pupils are keen to work and to take part in things; they commented that they take books home and go to the lunchtime study groups because they help them to make progress. However, the pupils were less sure about how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve their work. The pupils willingly apply for responsibilities and take their duties seriously. Those selling fruit in the mornings tout for business and make their own decisions about what to buy. Likewise, the elected school council is a quietly forceful group which has successfully campaigned for healthy lunches and is now working on a school/pupil agreement, having canvassed opinions.

In and around school, the pupils' behaviour is generally good. The pupils know there are trained pupil befrienders and adults who will help them if they have any problems. The pupils respect the learning mentor and behaviour improvement worker and are eager to gain awards for good conduct as well as good achievement. The huge contrast with the situation in 2003 is best seen in the absence of items in the school's worry box and the now very infrequent incidence of bullying and unacceptable behaviour in and out of class.

Attendance is below but now close to average. The school checks daily on absentees and has done much to make parents aware of the need to send their children to school regularly. This month, most parents kept their children out of school for only one day to celebrate Eid.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The inspectors agree with the school that the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Permanent and temporary teaching and support staff work very well together in planning lessons and sharing effective practice. As a result, the quality of teaching is now far more consistent. The growing proportion of good and very good teaching is having a beneficial impact on the pupils' achievement and interest in learning. Classrooms have very attractive displays of pupils' work along with key information to remind pupils of current work in English, mathematics and science. In the most effective lessons, the teachers skilfully lead the pupils step by step, extending the challenge for some and going back over some things for others. The teachers questioned the pupils carefully to ensure that they understood and demonstrated what the pupils needed to do. In many lessons, the support of other adults, occasionally using the pupils' first language, helped all the pupils to complete their tasks. A notable improvement since the inspection in 2003 is in the adults' use of praise to encourage the pupils. Relationships are good and the pupils show increased confidence in offering their ideas and sharing their work. Not all the teachers, however, are using their marking to acknowledge where the pupils have done well and what they can do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school that the curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and is much improved in the range of experiences to meet the needs of all the pupils. For example, to raise the profile of reading, the school has established times for volunteer adults and older pupils to hear younger ones read. A strong focus on literacy and numeracy is balanced by good opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and physical skills in a wide variety of activities in sport, art, music and drama. Over 75% of the pupils take part in extra curricular activities. Many initiatives, including the Breakfast Club, study support classes and sessions for gifted and talented pupils, are funded through Excellence in Cities. Very good use is made of specialists and coaches to enrich the pupils' experiences. The 'Balloon for Grandad' project, led by a visiting artist, sparked work in art and writing for Year 3 pupils. They have created magnificent banners combining textiles and materials in imaginative ways. Computers are used effectively in many subjects as well as part of booster and support sessions. During the inspection, a pupil was on hand to photograph, for inclusion in the school newspaper, pupils receiving the Healthy Schools award. This venture and the teaching of philosophy are facets of the good programme in personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The inspectors agree with the school that aspects of the care, guidance and support for the pupils are good, but they judge it to be satisfactory overall. The really strong pastoral care for pupils is not matched fully by the academic guidance and support. With the help of consultants from the local authority, the school is refining its systems to track the pupils' progress and to set targets. A good step has been the identification of pupils who have not made enough progress and those who are at risk of underachieving. It is too early to see whether the support sessions have been effective in raising their achievement.

The headteacher takes a strong lead in the care of the pupils and uses her good links with other agencies and the local community to safeguard them. The learning mentor, behaviour improvement worker and community worker have been key players in raising the pupils' self esteem and setting up ways for the pupils to voice their concerns. The quality of the support has improved for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who have English as an additional language. It is now satisfactory with some good aspects. Individual education plans have realistic short term targets and clear strategies to help the pupils achieve them. However, the teachers do not always take them fully into account when planning lessons. While there is a good focus on teaching new words, not enough is done to foster more complex language structures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The inspectors and the school agree that the quality of overall leadership and management is satisfactory. It is much improved since 2003 and has many good aspects, but there is still some way to go before all managers are equally proficient in leading effective programmes of improvement. Reluctance to change and staffing issues thwarted initial steps to make improvements. Now there is a strong team spirit, blossoming confidence from what has been achieved and a keen commitment from teaching and support staff alike to make things even better. The school has opened its doors to the community and developed strong partnerships with parents, Birkby Infants' School and key agencies, particularly Excellence in Cities. It is reaping the benefits in its growing popularity with parents and applicants for teaching posts. From January, for the first time in many years, the school will have a full complement of permanent staff and is well placed to continue to improve. The headteacher gives good, clear leadership. Her vision for the school and strong determination to get the best for the pupils were echoed in the influential work of the headteacher of Birkby Infants' School who ably led the junior school during the maternity leave of the headteacher in the last school year.

The work of the governing body has strengthened. The chair has been astute in his decisions to draw governors into everyday matters. Governors are holding the school to account; they have been rigorous in their appointment of teaching staff and made

some pragmatic, sensible decisions to realign the senior management structure and make the most of individuals' skills. Managers have realised their part in whole school success; some have been effective in making improvements in the provision and there is a growing pool of expertise in evaluating critically how well actions have brought about improvement. The school's self evaluation, jointly compiled by all key managers, gave a fair picture but was not sharp enough in identifying the factors that account for low standards and exactly where the problems lie.

A key factor in the school's recent, accelerated progress has been the development and influence of good teamwork. Support staff commented that they now feel valued. They feel confident to take the initiative and offer their ideas. All are pulling together to improve what the school offers. The school is right in judging itself to give satisfactory value for money overall but did not recognise that it gives much better value in its pastoral work.

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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?	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	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	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

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	3	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?	3	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	3	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	3	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

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

You will know that I have been visiting your school each term since September 2003 to see how well you are getting on. This time I brought Mr Jones and Mrs Clarke to show them just how much has changed. Thank you for sharing your work and telling us about Birkby Juniors. Here are some things we liked about your school - you will see that we agree with you about many things.

- There is a lot going on and Birkby is a warm, friendly, exciting place to be!
- You get on with each other, behave well and follow the Birkby 'Be's'.
- You want to learn and you try hard in lessons especially when your teachers give you interesting things to do and make it fun. We saw some good work you had done.
- The prefects, shop salespeople, befrienders and helpers all take their jobs seriously. You school councillors are doing a super job in helping Mrs Davis to make the school a better place. You could tell other schools how to run a council!
- The adults are clever in showing your work in your classrooms and around the school. The banners of 'A balloon for Granddad' are top notch!

Birkby Juniors is just getting better and better. Well done everybody! You no longer need me to help you but to keep things moving I have asked Mr Anglesey, Mrs Davis and all the staff to do the following things.

They must help you to be more confident in speaking and reading English and also to be more clever in using words in your writing.

When the adults mark your work, they should tell you how well you have done and what you need to do next time to be better.

They must be smarter in deciding how best to help you learn. I think you could do really well with a bit more push! You can all help by telling your teachers which activities help you to learn well.

I know that your councillors will help Mr Anglesey and Mrs Davis to make even more improvements.