

Birkbeck Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101426
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	286055
Inspection date	21 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Krafft HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss G Scott
Headteacher	Mrs B Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Alma Road Sidcup DA14 4ED
Telephone number	020 8300 4161
Fax number	020 8302 6878

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Birkbeck is a large primary school with a Nursery. The social circumstances of most families are favourable and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average. A very few pupils are at the early stages of English language acquisition.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Birkbeck is a wonderful school and my son has made excellent progress' are the words of one parent, echoed by many. This outstanding school has an excellent caring and supportive ethos which is sharply focused on the enjoyment of learning. As a result, the personal development and academic achievement of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are outstanding.

One of the keys to the success of the school is the excellent leadership and management of the headteacher and her senior leaders. Together they have created a strong and talented team of teachers and support staff who have a clear understanding of how pupils learn best. This is seen from the moment pupils join the school. As one parent wrote, 'My child has settled well and thoroughly enjoys the sessions in the Nursery.' Most start with the skills and knowledge expected for their age and make good progress because their individual needs are identified quickly and provided for well. Outstanding teaching, guidance and support and a good curriculum, which is matched well to pupils' needs, results in them making excellent progress and reaching high standards by the time they leave the school. There is a constant and consistent striving for continuous improvement at every level. This is driven by rigorous analysis of data, exemplary monitoring and honest, although modest, self evaluation. As a result staff and governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what could be improved further. For example, the school has rightly identified that although high standards are reached, the progress of pupils in science in 2006 did not match the very good levels in mathematics and English. Actions taken to secure improvement where needed have been highly successful and demonstrate the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement. For example, there has been a focus on improving writing which led to Year 6 pupils making exceptionally good progress and reaching very high standards in English in national tests in 2006.

Another key to the success of the school is the strong emphasis it places on working in partnership with parents, pupils and other agencies so that all pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life. As one parent wrote, 'We are all part of a team and are encouraged to take an active part, as parents, in our child's progress.' Parents value this and recognise that it results in happy pupils who enjoy school, are eager to learn, feel safe, well cared for and achieve extremely well. The pupils also play their part in this successful school. They are enthusiastic, behave exceptionally well, are attentive and work hard because they respect and trust the adults in school and each other. The ethos of the school is captured by a parent who wrote, 'Although it is a big school, you still feel part of a big family.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress pupils make in science to match that in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Most pupils start school with the knowledge expected of their age although their communication, language and literacy skills and their social development are weaker. Good emphasis is placed on supporting these areas of learning and the progress pupils make is monitored carefully. As a result they make good progress and most reach the goals expected, and some go beyond, by the time they enter Year 1.

Pupils consistently reach high standards and make outstanding progress as they move through the school, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. This is because expectations are high and their individual needs are identified early. Pupils have challenging targets which are shared with their parents and reviewed regularly. Their progress towards these targets is monitored rigorously and those at risk of not achieving them are given good additional support and guidance. As a result targets are often exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils behave exceptionally well and have exemplary attitudes to learning because they enjoy their lessons and attend regularly. They say they feel safe and feel confident there is someone they can talk to if they feel unhappy or need support. One said, 'I feel safe because all adults comfort you and help you.'

Pupils talk knowledgeably about what they do to stay fit and healthy. They say they get lots of exercise and are proud of their Healthy Schools Award. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, particularly through the School Council. Members take on project management roles to raise money for charity and recycling ventures. Pupils have a sharp awareness of democracy and issues that affect the wider world. For example, they have written to leading politicians to raise awareness of the needs of children in other countries.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning is outstanding because there is a shared and consistent understanding of how to motivate, interest and engage pupils. Expectations are high and assessment information is used extremely well to challenge pupils and match tasks to individual needs. As a result pupils are eager to take part in the very good range of practical activities on offer and make excellent progress. Thorough and regular marking is sharply focused on helping pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. A brisk pace, many opportunities for pupils to explain their ideas and help each other, as well as good questioning, are consistent features of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets the needs of all pupils well, is relevant and there are good opportunities to link literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology with other subjects and through the school newspaper. The curriculum is enriched with themed weeks such as science week and visits from outside speakers such as story tellers and pupils from Kenya. Pupils enjoy visits to areas of local interest but a few parents would like to see these opportunities extended further. There is a good range of well attended extra curricular activities such as homework, art and gymnastics which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and are summed up by one parent who wrote, 'My son has flourished in an atmosphere of caring and learning so he feels secure and valued.' Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are robust. Staff are well trained and there are good levels of supervision.

The guidance and support given to all pupils is outstanding and contributes significantly to their excellent academic and personal development. This is because systems to track their progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the support they are given are well established and robust. One parent wrote, 'My child has special educational needs and the support he has received from an amazing team of teachers and teaching assistants is second to none.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management at all levels, under the excellent leadership of the headteacher, are outstanding. There is a clear, consistent, shared vision focused sharply on high expectations of the academic achievement and personal development of all pupils. The headteacher is supported exceptionally well by her senior leaders who have a thorough and detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision are exemplary. They are sharply focused and clearly linked to careful tracking of the progress pupils make. All staff, including those with curriculum responsibility, are held to account for the achievement of pupils through robust performance management procedures.

The governors have a thorough knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are systematic and robust in their support and challenge of the school to ensure continuous improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I would like to thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I very much enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and seeing you in lessons.

Your school is an outstanding one and you make excellent progress in your work. You are also cared for really well. Your behaviour is excellent; you are polite and care for each other well. You have lots of extra activities and clubs which many of you attend. Your school council has a lot of responsibility and does a really good job at raising funds for charity. Your teachers make the lessons interesting for you by giving you lots of things to do and getting you involved. You told me you really enjoyed this. You and your parents know what is expected of you and how to make your work even better. When you find things a bit difficult your teachers and the teaching assistants make sure you get the help you need.

I have asked everyone at the school to look at how they can help you make as much progress in science as you do in mathematics and English.

Thank you again for making me so welcome and I hope that you carry on working hard and doing so well.

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector