



Benton Park Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108459
Local Authority Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 288105
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Andrew Scott

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Corchester Walk
School category	Community		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	3–11		NE7 7SS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 266 5122
Number on roll (school)	288	Fax number	0191 226 8206
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Helen Richardson
		Headteacher	Miss Alice Witherow
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2001		

Age group 3–11	Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007	Inspection number 288105
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves a residential area of Newcastle where socio-economic conditions are broadly average. There is an average proportion of pupils learning English as a second language, mainly from families of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent. The proportion of pupils who leave or join during the year is slightly above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased in recent years and is currently above average. There are more pupils with statements of special educational need than is usually found in primary school. This is because the school has a centre for up to 12 pupils with hearing impairments.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school offers satisfactory provision for its pupils. It has a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils are well cared for and valued. Consistently good attendance testifies to this. Recent improvements to the school, spearheaded by the new headteacher, have already had a distinct effect on some aspects of the school and are beginning to influence pupils' achievement positively.

Pupils develop satisfactorily as individuals. Their behaviour is generally good and they enjoy learning, although this varies according to the quality of teaching. They have a sensible understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle but do not yet take enough responsibility for it themselves. They are playing an increasingly effective role in influencing the school's development, especially through the school council, but their contribution to the wider community is less well developed.

Children's attainment on entry is average, although this varies from year to year. They make satisfactory progress through the Nursery and Reception classes and mostly achieve the goals expected of them. It is a similar picture by Year 2. Progress is satisfactory and standards in the national tests are usually average in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 6, overall standards have been rising in recent years. They have been consistently average in English. Standards in mathematics are broadly average but have been more variable. In science, standards have been below average. All teachers do not expect enough of pupils and do not give them enough scope for independent learning. Pupils' preparation for their next school is therefore adequate but no better. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. However, those pupils with hearing impairments make good progress because of the high quality support they receive.

The quality of teaching has improved because of astute monitoring and support by the headteacher and senior staff. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and there is good teaching in the Reception class and Year 6. Too often, teachers do not use their knowledge of pupils' progress to set work that fully meets all pupils' needs. The consistency of teaching has been understandably disrupted by high turnover of staff and several maternity leaves. The school is well aware that the curriculum, whilst satisfactory, is not diverse and stimulating enough for pupils, although there are some good examples of enrichment.

The headteacher's open, clear-sighted and decisive leadership has brought about improvements to the school during her comparatively short time in post. As well as improving teaching, she has strengthened the school's systems of assessment, improved the accommodation and restructured the management. She is well supported by the two senior staff and the governing body. The school's development planning is adequate but is not fine-tuned enough to provide a swift enough pace of change. The school provides satisfactory value for money but recent improvements indicate that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in science and mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers use assessment data more skilfully to set a consistently high challenge for all pupils.
- Refine the school's development planning to ensure that the pace of improvement is more dynamic.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that are broadly average. Progress through the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory and pupils mostly reach all the goals expected of them when they enter Year 1. By Year 2, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been average over recent years, as they were in 2006. From school records, pupils in the current Year 2 may not achieve so well. This is mainly because of a lack of continuity in teaching, which has been resolved.

By Year 6, standards have been on a clear upward trend in recent years. In the national tests of 2006, results in English remained average. Standards in mathematics dropped because too few pupils achieved the higher level. In science, standards have been improving but were still below average in 2006, mainly because pupils do not develop investigative skills well enough. In all subjects, the level of challenge is not consistently high enough. There is evidence that movement in the pupil population has an adverse effect on achievement.

Pupils with learning difficulties and those learning English as a second language achieve as well as other pupils, and there are no consistent differences between boys and girls. However, pupils with hearing impairments make good progress because of skilful teaching and close individual support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes towards learning, reflected in their good attendance. Despite occasional misbehaviour, pupils generally behave well. They have a good understanding of right and wrong so their moral development is good. However, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The school particularly misses opportunities to promote reflection in lessons and assemblies.

Pupils' understanding and adoption of a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise are satisfactory. Coaching sessions for golf are well attended, for example, and pupils enjoy activities such as football and netball. They feel safe in school and say that they can count on their friends for support, or a trusted adult if necessary, if they have a problem.

The school council is playing an increasingly active part in decision-making, such as over the provision of bicycle racks. Pupils are involved in fundraising and regularly take part in local events, but have limited opportunity to experience the wider world. Satisfactory standards in basic skills prepare pupils adequately for their next school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but the quality is not consistent. This means that the rate of pupils' progress is only satisfactory. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils and so pupils are keen to learn. Teachers plan activities to match pupils' abilities but not all are adept enough at using assessment to provide the challenge that really motivates pupils to make good or better progress. Pupils mostly engage well with lessons but are often rather passive in their responses.

Teaching assistants provide good support for individual pupils with learning difficulties but, like other pupils, these pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and so make satisfactory, rather than good, progress. The teaching of pupils who have hearing impairments is highly skilled. These pupils make good progress as a result of well planned activities in the unit and the effectiveness of support in mainstream classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers plan well together to ensure that pupils receive consistent provision, especially in the mixed-year classes and there is a suitable focus on English, mathematics and science. However, teachers do not make the most of other subjects to promote literacy and numeracy. There is some good enrichment through clubs and opportunities like the 'Creativity Week', and through good partnerships with local schools and sports clubs. However, such activities are not an intrinsic part of everyday learning. The school has already highlighted this as an area for development.

The curriculum is inclusive and prepares pupils adequately for the next phase of their education. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Individual learning plans clearly identify areas for pupils to improve but planned actions are not specific enough. However, provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Procedures to safeguard pupils and risk assessments are fully in place. Systems for child protection are satisfactory and there are good links with outside agencies and families to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. There is very good support for pupils with hearing impairments,

because of teachers' expertise and their varied strategies to support the development of auditory skills. Good systems to monitor attendance have also resulted in increased punctuality. Arrangements for pupils as they transfer to a new stage in their education are good.

Newly established procedures to monitor pupils' progress are satisfactory, although these are not yet used consistently to give all pupils clear guidance on how to improve. Pupils have good, individual objectives for literacy and numeracy but teachers' marking is not consistently linked to them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the school is good. The headteacher's enlightened, caring approach creates the positive atmosphere in the school that parents appreciate. She has a sensible and clear vision for the school, which is shared by all staff, especially the senior staff. The acting deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are effective and influential in supporting colleagues and improving behaviour.

Management is satisfactory. The school has a largely accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, so that it is clear about what needs to improve. Monitoring of the school's work is regular and professional support for staff is proving beneficial. However, the school's development planning is not precise enough in specifying required actions to ensure that there is swift enough improvement.

Governance is satisfactory but its influence has improved recently. Governors are increasingly involved in checking the school's progress and have supported the headteacher well in ensuring healthy financial management. There is effective administration within the school, which ensures smooth day-to-day operation.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Parents rightly praise the school's progress and the headteacher's achievements. Her resolute leadership has led to important improvements in the overall quality of the school's work. The impact on standards has been slower, but the underlying signs are encouraging. Therefore, the school has good capacity to improve further.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Benton Park Primary School

Corchester Walk

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE7 7SS

24 January 2007

Dear Children

Thank you for all your help during the inspection of the school. My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you all. Your opinions were very valuable for us to get to know your school properly.

We believe that your school gives you a satisfactory education and looks after you well. We know that you enjoy school and are impressed by your good attendance. Although there is some bad behaviour occasionally, you generally behave well and get on well with one another. You are adopting an increasingly healthy lifestyle but there is still some way to go. The school appreciates your thoughts about how to improve it, especially through the work of the school council. We feel, though, that you would benefit from a greater awareness of the wider world.

Your achievement in your work is satisfactory. Standards are what they should be in English but they are a little below average in mathematics and, especially, science by Year 6. We think you could do much better and your teachers are ready to set you more demanding work in all your lessons. We hope that you will rise to this challenge and that your standards will improve accordingly. We also support the school's keenness to make lessons more interesting so that you are more enthusiastic about your work.

Your school is improving, thanks in particular to your headteacher. She has made a big difference to your school and she is well supported, especially by the two senior teachers. She has improved the facilities, including your playground, and she has helped teachers to improve their work. We have asked the school to be clearer in its plans for the school so that progress can be faster.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead Inspector