



Biddick Hall Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108678
Local Authority South Tyneside
Inspection number 288153
Inspection date 23 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Heap

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chesterton Road
School category	Community		South Shields, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	7-11		NE34 9SP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 5362186
Number on roll (school)	279	Fax number	0191 5191430
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Canon John Miller
		Headteacher	Mr Thomas Ian Mills
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an above average sized junior school. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The school serves an area of high social disadvantage and a well above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Nearly all pupils are from white, English speaking families and there are very small groups of minority ethnic pupils and children looked after by the local authority. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average and the school has a seven-place unit for pupils with very challenging behaviour. The school achieved Beacon School status and academic achievement awards and has a place in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Best Schools list.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that gives excellent value for money. One parent's written comments echo the views of many. 'It's been the best thing I've ever done for my two children, changing schools to Biddick Hall...I'll give the school 10 out of 10.' There is a long track record of exceptional provision that led to the school being awarded 'Beacon' status and having an excellent previous inspection report. The consistent recognition of the school's qualities and achievements owes much to its high expectations of pupils in everything they do. These ambitious expectations are realistic because staff know the pupils well and they work very profitably to get the support of parents. This results in pupils thoroughly enjoying school and often making exceptional progress in their academic work. Combining these strengths with pupils' exemplary attitudes to school means that they are very well prepared for secondary school and later life. The school has a high profile in the local area and pupils contribute to this very well. At school, many pupils take on extra and very important responsibilities, such as the playleaders who help the younger children settle quickly into school life and playtime routines. These older pupils are very happy to do this and carry out their duties with care and resolve. Throughout the school, pupils play safely and understand the need to lead a healthy lifestyle.

The school rightly judges that standards are high and pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in reading, mathematics and science. None of the outstanding outcomes would be possible without the exceptional care, curriculum and teaching that the school continues to provide. These strengths foster a warm and challenging environment in which potential barriers to learning are minimised. Pupils say that they feel very safe and secure and know who to turn to if there is a problem or difficulty. The headteacher fosters this superbly through his daily 'surgery' which is open to all pupils to approach him and he listens and guides. Pupils are very interested in the very broad, balanced and relevant curriculum provided for them. The school is particularly adept at providing interesting content and rewarding endeavour and achievement. This leads to pupils developing increased self-esteem and self confidence. There is no evidence of teaching being less than good and much of it is outstanding. Teachers feel valued, know where they are going and that improvement is a continuous process. Their practice has been much observed and commented upon in the 'Beacon' school role.

The school does not rest on its laurels because of the excellent leadership and management. Managers and governors know the school exceptionally well and they ensure the school meets the ambitious aims it presents to its community. Areas for improvement continue to be identified and the school is very well placed to improve further. For example, the school recognises that standards and progress in writing could be better. Inspection evidence shows that the school is right because pupils are not doing enough writing in subjects other than English. Furthermore, there are inconsistencies in the marking of writing that mean pupils are not always sure about what they need to do to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the opportunities for writing across all subjects.
- Make the marking of writing consistent across the school so that pupils know what they need to do improve further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

By 2005, standards at the end of Year 6 have been consistently well above the national average, particularly in mathematics and science. The outstanding progress pupils make in these subjects meant it was in the top 1% of schools nationally. Trends in these subjects are very strong. English results have been broadly average, with reading better than writing. The satisfactory progress in English means the school is in the top third of schools nationally. Early indications from the 2006 national test results show standards to be lower, but this was expected owing to higher levels of pupils with learning difficulties. Nevertheless, standards in science have continued to be high and English results improved. Challenging targets were exceeded in English. Girls do better than boys, but progress is similar from different starting points.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and sometimes very good gains, including those in the Behavioural Support Unit. There is evidence in the national data that some pupils who were below average at seven years of age achieved average standards at 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Throughout the school, there are extremely positive attitudes to learning and pupils say they thoroughly enjoy school. Attendance is average. Moral and social development is particularly strong and leads to confident pupils who have respect for themselves and others and behaviour that is excellent. The effective work on personal, health and social education results in good knowledge about healthy lifestyles, such as the importance of regular exercise and a balanced diet. Pupils feel safe in school, know how to avoid conflict and trust the staff to listen to their concerns. They contribute to school life very well through the effective school council. A highly positive learning ethos is created which supports learning very effectively and successfully develops the skills and understanding needed for children's future well-being. Pupils are involved in the wider community through performances and fund raising. Pupils reflect carefully and widely on a range of issues, such as bullying and the environment. Lessons in religious education, art and music give pupils strong insights into the diverse nature of our society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Evidence from books, school monitoring and inspection evidence is that teaching is very rarely less than good and much is outstanding. Typical features include the following:

- very good subject knowledge in mathematics and science promotes exceptional progress in these subjects and high standards
- very strong planning ensures that different groups in classes are challenged
- excellent classroom management means that pupils' learning is not disrupted and there are lots of very good opportunities for shared and partner work
- challenging questions lead to pupils developing their thinking and framing really good responses.

In Year 6, groups of pupils with similar levels of prior attainment are taught together. In English, the teaching and learning in reading are very strong and the school is particularly keen to develop a wide range of resources that interest boys. There is some really good practice in the use of learning targets and in the marking of pupils' work, but this is not consistent throughout the school in writing. In a small number of classes comments do not always inform the pupil of what needs to be done to make further progress. Pupils with additional learning needs, including those in the Behavioural Support Unit, are supported well and helped to make very good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum very effectively promotes learning and makes an exemplary contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. The school provides a rich and interesting programme that is well matched to pupils' differing needs, including those in the Behavioural Support Unit. Throughout the school, planning is thorough and provides all pupils with an exemplary range of activities, including excellent provision for French. Pupils gain new skills and develop a wider understanding of the world beyond the classroom because of:

- the extremely varied range of popular out of school activities, such as sports, music and drama activities
- the rich range of visits and visitors, including the popular residential visit. Excellent links with other schools and outside agencies have a positive impact on pupils' learning, for example joint work with the local secondary school on modern foreign languages. As a result of this excellent programme and good teaching all children make outstanding progress over their full time in the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Procedures for safeguarding pupils, including checks on adults, child protection and risk assessments are robust. Strong partnerships between teachers, support staff, parents and outside agencies make a very effective contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement and personal development. Academic and personal achievements are rigorously tracked as the pupils move through the school. Pupils feel well supported and motivated in their learning. They are particularly pleased when they achieve a personal learning target and receive rewards, often in assembly. A very good example is the weekly report the senior midday supervisor gives to the school and the rewards she gives for pupils' helpful support and notable behaviour. Parents are very supportive of learning at home. The early identification of children with extra needs ensures they receive good support. In the Behaviour Support Unit monitoring is very detailed and close links are forged with parents and carers. The strong induction procedures help children settle quickly and well into school routines.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides excellent leadership that is highly successful at promoting high standards, providing exemplary care and establishing an excellent learning climate. The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, key staff and governors. The school is thorough in its self-evaluation and there is wide consultation. Initiatives are very well supported through prudent financial management and effective approaches to continuous professional development. Governors are very aware of the challenges faced because they are well informed. Good levels of monitoring are in place and staff are effectively involved in these activities, such as observing teaching and tracking pupils' achievements. The headteacher has a vision that is coherent and strong and this has led to great stability and loyalty, particularly among the teaching staff. Monitoring of provision is honest, fair and searching and puts the needs of pupils first.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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	1
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	2

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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1
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.

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	2
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

Biddick Hall Junior School

Chesterton Road

South Shields

Tyne and Wear

NE34 9SP

23 November 2006

Dear Children

It was a great pleasure and privilege to visit your excellent school. I was very impressed by the courtesy and help you provided. Many thanks to those of you who gave up your time to talk with me.

What I really liked about your school:

- the outstanding progress made by all pupils and the high quality work you produce
- your excellent skills, knowledge and understanding in mathematics and science
- the high standards in singing and French
- the high levels of enjoyment and attitudes to work that are your response to the exceptionally varied and interesting work that you are given
- your excellent behaviour and the way that you very willingly take responsibility and help others, for example the playleaders' scheme
- the high quality of teaching and care, much of which is outstanding, and the hard work of all the staff
- the excellent leadership and management shown by your teachers and governors ensures that the school continues to seek improvement.

I have asked your teachers to increase the amount of writing that you are asked to do in subjects like history, geography and religious education. You can help by always doing your best writing in whichever subject you are working. I have also asked them to make sure that when they mark your work they let you know what you need to do to make your work even better. You can assist by making sure that you know what your learning targets are and work hard to achieve them.

Good luck for the future and, please, continue to work hard.

Yours sincerely

John Heap

Lead inspector