

Biddick Hall Infants School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108682
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	288154
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2006
Reporting inspector	Andrew Scott

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

The inspection of the day care was carried out under the Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where (funded) nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	228
Day care	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keiran Cannon
Headteacher	Mrs Myra Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002
Date of previous day care inspection	1 March 2005
School address	Galsworthy Road South Shields Tyne and Wear NE34 9JD
Telephone number	0191 5367943
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large infant school mainly serves an urban council estate of considerable deprivation. Virtually all pupils are from White British families and there is very little mobility in the pupil population. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high. For the past 18 months, re-building work has caused disruption to normal school life. The school gained extended school status in 2005 and has a Children's Centre on site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Biddick Hall Infants is a good school. It has a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel happy and secure. This, together with the good teaching, enables pupils to achieve well by the time they leave the school. Standards by Year 2 have been high in recent years but are currently closer to average, mainly because of the disruption of major building work and staff absences. Now, with greater stability and the completion of the Children's Centre, the school is well placed to develop further.

Teaching is mostly good in all year groups. There is a positive atmosphere in each classroom, based on mutual respect between staff and pupils. Teachers make learning objectives clear, explain new concepts thoroughly and value pupils' contributions. As a result, pupils concentrate well, understand what they need to learn and play a full part in lessons. In the Foundation Stage, children progress well, especially in language, numeracy and personal and social development, which are especially weak when they begin school. However, teachers throughout the school do not make the best use of assessment data to make sure that all lessons fully meet the needs of all pupils.

The school has good systems to safeguard pupils and to help them acquire a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils choose the healthy options at lunchtime, and relish some fruit or even a tomato at break-time. They know how important exercise is and join organised games energetically. They take on jobs responsibly and learn to be considerate of one another. Helped by a solid foundation in their basic skills, they are prepared satisfactorily for life ahead.

The curriculum is satisfactory with strengths in the provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is ample emphasis on basic skills, but the school is seeking to link subjects together to put learning in context and motivate pupils fully. Similarly, teachers do not give pupils enough scope to appreciate the culture and the multicultural nature of the wider world. However, the strong links with the local estate are valuable to pupils' sense of community.

The good leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, enables the school to develop well. The school knows where it is succeeding and how it can improve. However, not all senior staff are involved in school improvement as much as they should be and they do not carry out detailed enough analyses of perceived weaknesses in order to fine-tune their action plans. Governors are very supportive but are not rigorous enough in checking the school's progress. Overall though, the school is progressing well, has good capacity for improvement and offers good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment information more skilfully to plan work that consistently challenges pupils of all abilities.
- Extend the range of pupils' curricular and cultural activities to enrich their learning and broaden their horizons.
- Ensure that the school's plans for improvement are based on a thorough analysis of areas for development and that action plans are more detailed and specific.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All pupils achieve well by the time they leave school, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children begin in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are well below those typical for children of their age, particularly in language, mathematics and personal and social development. Progress is good through the Foundation Stage, especially in these aspects, although children are still below the goals expected of them by the end of the Reception year.

In recent years, standards by Year 2 have been significantly above average. In the national tests of 2006, however, standards fell and were average in mathematics, above average in science but below average in reading and writing. This was due to a number of reasons, including staff absences, extensive building work and the decision not to place the pupils into ability groups across the year. The levels of attainment of the current Year 2 pupils are all broadly average, which show that these pupils achieve well from their low starting point on entry.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate the many opportunities the school provides. Relationships across the school are good. Pupils treat each other with respect and are polite and friendly. They mostly behave well both in and out of class, and move around sensibly and safely. They are keen to take on roles and responsibilities including working as playground buddies, mini buds and door monitors. Attendance remains a little below the national average despite the school's best efforts to encourage all parents to send their children to school.

Pupils know that sensible eating, exercise and rest are needed to be healthy. A 'Pride Project' takes place annually to build self-esteem, with pupils and parents working together. Pupils feel safe and secure. They know that incidents of bullying will be dealt with quickly and fairly. They are beginning to develop an understanding of citizenship from work with the community through, for example, collecting Harvest Festival gifts for the elderly and fund-raising for the 'Jeans for Genes' day. Such abilities give them a solid start to life ahead.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their moral and social development is very good but spiritual and, particularly, cultural aspects are slightly weaker elements, because there is too little scope for pupils to appreciate the rich diversity of the world in which they live.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers present new learning in a clear and lively manner and so pupils are interested and understand what they should be learning. Resources such as puppets, flashcards and the interactive whiteboards are used well to explain and reinforce learning. The encouragement and frequent praise by teachers ensure that pupils take part in lessons readily.

Pupils work particularly well in groups because of the close, often individualised, support by all adults in the classroom. Teachers establish clear routines so that most pupils do not need constant supervision to keep them on task.

However, teaching is not always as effective as it might be. Teachers know how well pupils are progressing but do not link this enough to their plans so that all pupils are always fully challenged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum follows national guidelines. It has a suitable emphasis on key subjects, such as English and mathematics, but does not always inspire and motivate pupils fully. Because of this, the school is currently reviewing planning to make the curriculum more interesting and relevant for pupils. For example, information and communication technology is not developed enough through other subjects, and is currently a school priority. Provision for pupils who find learning difficult is good because they are identified early and given effective plans for learning.

The curriculum is enriched by visits and visitors, such as storytellers and clowns, and special events like the Pirates Week. These activities stimulate pupils' interest and encourage them to work hard. There are good opportunities for physical education outside lessons through a range of organised activities, including the recently installed and popular Trim Trail. The allotment is a real asset for environmental education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff work hard to ensure that pupils are well cared for and supported. Pupils say they feel safe and know that they can discuss with a caring adult any problems they may have. Effective systems are in place for safeguarding pupils. The school has established good relationships with parents and adopts good procedures for pupils to make a smooth transition from early childcare to school. The new Children's Centre is beginning to strengthen these. Shared activities ensure a smooth transition to the local junior school.

Systems for tracking pupils' progress are satisfactory. Teachers have a clear view of how well pupils are doing, but do not analyse the data enough to give clear guidance and set the right targets that will help pupils achieve more.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership of the headteacher has steered the school shrewdly through an awkward phase of building work and staff absences. She has ensured a sustained focus on standards, whilst strengthening the mantle of care that embraces the school. She and the deputy headteacher are a close-knit and influential team, and they ensure that the school has the right priorities.

The school knows itself well. It is well aware of its strengths and areas for improvement. However, subject leaders are limited in their formal monitoring of subjects. In addition, senior staff's plans for improvement need to be more crisply focused. Governors are very supportive and work hard for the school but they do not check the school's progress with enough rigour.

- Links with parents and the community have improved and these are beginning to influence pupils' achievement. The school responds well to parents' views when appropriate. It is no

surprise, therefore, that parents think highly of the school and value, for example, the approachability of staff.

The school has done well since the last inspection. The strong sense of teamwork among staff and their eagerness to improve are clear signs that the school has good capacity to develop further.

Effectiveness of registered day care

Grade: 2

Day care in the Smarties breakfast and after school club is good, with outstanding features in the care, learning and play and the high quality of the physical environment. Children are encouraged to eat healthily and keep fit. At times, their after school meal is not so nutritious and some children would like more to eat. The designated room for the club is a haven of peace and relaxation for children before and after school. It is well organised and provides an excellent range of play equipment, all easily accessible to the children. They take good responsibility for keeping their base tidy. All aspects of safety both indoors and outdoors are dealt with effectively, for example, procedures are clearly documented for all those working with children and also shared with parents. Relationships between children and staff are excellent. There is a palpable air of calm and enjoyment of play and learning at all times. Social and emotional development are particularly well promoted and well exemplified by the children as they co-operate with each other when playing. Behaviour is excellent because the children are sensitively reminded of the routines and treated with high levels of respect at all times. All procedures are well documented or displayed and well known to all staff. All of whom have additional roles in the school.

Since the last inspection in March 2005, there have been no complaints about the registered day care that required Ofsted or the school to take action so that the day care continued to meet the National Standards. The school is required to keep a record of complaints about the registered day care made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints about the registered day care other than those made to Ofsted.

Recommendations or actions to improve the registered day care

- Provide children with a healthy, balanced meal after school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

The effectiveness of the registered day care

The quality and standards of the registered day care	2
How effective is the day care in helping children to be healthy?	2
How effective is the day care in protecting children and helping them to stay safe?	2
How effective is the day care in helping children to achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
How effective is the day care in helping children to make a positive contribution?	2
How effectively is the day care organised?	2
Does the day care meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides?	Yes
Has the day care improved since the last inspection?	Yes
Does the day care require enforcement action?	No
Does the day care require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Biddick Hall Infants School

Galsworthy Road

South Shields

Tyne and Wear

NE34 9JD

13 October 2006

Dear children

We enjoyed meeting you and all the adults during our visit to your school. I am writing to thank you for the help you gave to Mrs Bennett and myself. This has helped us gain a good picture of the school.

Like you, we think your school is good, especially because you do well in your work. We know you try hard in lessons, concentrate well and help one another in group work. The school helps you to be healthier through your food and exercise. You are sensible around school, looking after each other and not becoming overexcited. We know that you like the activities at lunch-times and break-times, particularly the new Trim Trail.

We are happy that the school takes good care of you so that you feel safe and sound. Mrs Edwards and all the staff work very hard for you and have your best interests at heart. The teachers make sure that you learn the important things so that your move to the junior school will be an easy one.

We have asked your teachers to make sure your work is not too easy, although not too hard. We also think that lessons could be more interesting and that the school could find more ways of improving your life at school. You can help by encouraging your parents to make sure you come to school every day.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Scott

Lead inspector