



# Birch Copse Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109844  
**Local Authority** West Berkshire  
**Inspection number** 288510  
**Inspection date** 30 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Vanessa Ward

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Wittenham Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community		Tilehurst
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11		Reading RG31 5LN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01189 427442
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	393	<b>Fax number</b>	01189 454489
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr K Pugh
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr J E W Peacock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2003		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Birch Copse Primary School is larger than average. Most of its pupils are White British. Their social backgrounds are mixed, although a significant number come from an area of social and economic advantage. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. There has been a high turnover of staff in the past 18 months.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Birch Copse Primary is a good school that provides a good quality of education and enables its pupils to achieve well. The partnerships it builds with parents, local schools and outside agencies are outstanding and are used very successfully to enhance pupils' learning. Parents greatly appreciate all that the school does. They say that their children 'love school and are really flourishing - the staff not only care about teaching a well rounded curriculum, but also take into account life skills'.

The headteacher has a very comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of how to bring about improvement and this contributes significantly to the pupils' good achievement. He is supported well by the deputy, staff and governors and has established a strong sense of teamwork. Whilst there is determination among all staff to improve the school, most of the subject leaders are new to their roles. They do not yet have the necessary expertise to enable them to influence developments in their subjects.

The good provision in the Foundation Stage gives the children a positive start to their learning. Throughout the school, good teaching and a stimulating curriculum promote good achievement. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. In English, they are often high. The school acknowledges that standards in mathematics could be higher, especially in Years 3 to 6, and is putting strategies in place to remedy this. There remains more to do though, particularly in ensuring that pupils of all abilities are provided with sufficient challenge in mathematics. Whilst some pupils are aware of the academic targets they are trying to achieve in English and mathematics, this is not widespread and pupils are not sufficiently involved in evaluating how well they are doing.

Good levels of care and support for individual pupils contribute to the pupils' good personal development and well-being. They enjoy school and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say that 'the teachers make everything as interesting and fun as they can'. They readily accept the many responsibilities they are given around the school and carry them out conscientiously. Participation in healthy eating and sport helps pupils to gain a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Good provision through the curriculum gives them comprehensive knowledge of how to keep safe. The school's focus on teaching basic skills helps to prepare pupils well for later life.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics, particularly in Years 3 to 6, ensuring that teachers challenge all pupils to do as well as they can.
- Develop the expertise of subject leaders in order to increase their influence over standards and achievement in their subjects.
- Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning targets and involve them more in evaluating how well they are doing.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. The children enter the school with standards that are typical of most four-year-olds. In some aspects of reading and writing, they are better than this. They make good progress through the Reception year, the majority reaching the expected goals in all areas of learning, sometimes exceeding them. The teaching from Years 1 to 6 successfully builds on this strong start and all groups of pupils make good progress. However, analysis of data shows that pupils' progress is slower in mathematics. As a result of the rigorous tracking of progress, more intervention is taking place to support pupils who make less progress than expected, particularly in mathematics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The pupils' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. As a result, they feel valued and enjoy school and say that 'everything we do is good'. Their attendance is above average. Pupils gain a good understanding of what is right and what is wrong. They feel safe, and this enables them to express their concerns and feelings, confident that they will be listened to. Pupils' knowledge of cultures and traditions develops well through the curriculum, and by means of visitors to the school.

They willingly assist in the smooth running of the school, older pupils carrying out many responsibilities at lunchtime, and in preparation for assemblies. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles in school, drinking water regularly through the day and taking part in sports and exercise. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. However, at playtimes, it is often boisterous and the school is taking steps to provide more purposeful activities to remedy this. Pupils feel they have a voice through their school and class councils and have been instrumental in the provision of play equipment at break times. Participation in events such as visiting old people in their homes and organising fund-raising for charities helps pupils to develop valuable skills for life beyond school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good teaching and learning contribute to the pupils' good achievement. Very positive relationships boost pupils' confidence and promote self-esteem. Pupils say that 'the teachers are kind and considerate and always help us if we do not understand'. This makes the pupils into confident learners and contributes to their good progress. Pupils working out subtraction sums using a new method of calculation showed confidence in this technique and worked purposefully in applying it.

Teachers share the purposes of their lesson with the pupils very effectively. This helps them to know what they are expected to learn. Support staff work well with small groups of pupils, especially those with learning difficulties or disabilities. As part of its drive to raise standards in mathematics, the school is increasing both the challenge it provides for pupils of differing abilities and its teaching of mathematical problem-solving strategies.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The good curriculum is well balanced and is enhanced effectively by a good range of educational visits, visitors to the school and clubs. It successfully supports pupils' academic, personal and social development. The curriculum is currently being reviewed to make learning more exciting and to introduce more themes to link different subjects together. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about their enjoyment of special 'art' and 'design and technology' weeks. The school places strong emphasis on teaching the skills of literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. It is now increasing the opportunities to practise mathematical skills in a range of subjects. Pupils of all abilities are enabled to enjoy a full curriculum. The increase in the time allocated to the teaching of mathematics and the division of the two Year 6 classes into three groups for mathematics lessons are contributing to the drive to raise standards. Pupils do not currently receive the recommended two hours per week of physical education as part of the regular curriculum and the school is planning to increase this as it works to gain the Healthy Schools Award. In the Foundation Stage, there is a good balance between activities led by adults and those the children choose for themselves. Links with specialist teachers from the local secondary school are used very effectively to enhance the curriculum and enrich pupils' learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is good, and this establishes an environment in which pupils feel valued and ready to learn. Parents affirm this overwhelmingly, saying that 'we are so impressed with the caring, happy atmosphere...the teachers are positive and approachable'. Liaison with outside agencies is used extremely effectively to support the well-being and academic development of the pupils. Regular contact with teachers from the local secondary school means that pupils are well prepared for the transition at the end of Year 6. Whilst teachers' marking provides some feedback to pupils about how well they are doing, they are not made sufficiently aware of their learning targets, nor are they adequately involved in evaluating their progress towards them. Systems to ensure the safety of pupils are well established and monitored effectively.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management contribute to the school's effective provision and to the pupils' good progress. The headteacher successfully involves the staff, governors, parents and pupils in evaluating how well the school is doing and in planning for improvement. This has led to several successful initiatives, such as improving pupils' skills in speaking, listening and writing, and promoting the use of ICT in many subjects. The success of these initiatives indicates that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

A new senior leadership team has recently been formed and these leadership roles are being developed so that they make a greater contribution to improvement. Training is planned for the many new subject leaders to help them develop skills in monitoring, analysing and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects.

Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide the headteacher with a good balance of support and challenge.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	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**

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited Birch Copse recently. I enjoyed talking to you and your views and opinions were very helpful. You told me that you like going to school and think it is a good school. Your parents and carers think so too and I agree with them.

Your teachers make learning fun and they teach you well. This helps you to make good progress and to do well in the tests in Year 6. However, your test results show that you do better in English and science than in mathematics. Your teachers are already trying to help you improve in mathematics and I have asked them to do more of this. Your teachers are good at checking your progress, but I have asked them to involve you more and help you to understand what you need to do next to improve your work.

The school is good at helping you to take on responsibilities, especially in Year 6. I am glad that your class and school councils help you to make your school better. I could see that you enjoy using the new equipment at playtimes. It is good that you eat healthily in school and drink plenty of water. You know how to keep safe and you told me that the adults will always help you if you have a problem.

Your headteacher, teachers and governors are good at finding ways to improve your school. The teachers work together to find the best way to teach all of the subjects. I have asked them to do more of this so that you can learn even better. I am sure that you will help them as much as you can.

I hope you carry on enjoying school and working hard.

Yours sincerely

Vanessa Ward

Lead Inspector