

Biggin CofE Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 112822 |
| Local Authority | DERBYSHIRE |
| Inspection number | 289422 |
| Inspection date | 20 April 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Joanne Harvey |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 34 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Eric Page |
| Headteacher | Mrs Heather Gosney |
| Date of previous school inspection | 14 October 2002 |
| School address | Biggin Buxton Derbyshire SK17 0DQ |
| Telephone number | 0129884279 |
| Fax number | |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average size voluntary controlled primary school with only two classes. It serves the small village of Biggin near Buxton in Derbyshire and many pupils come from remote farms in the surrounding area. As is often the case with a small school, pupils attainment on entry varies but it is often below average. The proportion of pupils entitled to claim free school meals is lower than in most schools, as is the proportion of pupils who are not of White British origin. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and currently there is no pupil with a statement of special educational need. The school has Healthy Schools Status and an ActiveMark for physical education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has some important outstanding features and some areas for further improvement. The determination and commitment of the extremely effective headteacher is one of the main reasons why the school is successful. She and her small and hardworking team believe that pupils cannot learn effectively without strong foundations to support their personal, social and emotional needs.

Excellent personal development opportunities are provided to each pupil. The warm and nurturing family atmosphere along with the strong Christian ethos also underpins the school's success. Everyone goes the extra mile to help pupils achieve the school vision to 'Achieve your best, Believe in yourself, Care for others'. Consequently pupils feel valued, secure, confident and ready to learn. It is no surprise that pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development which, by the time they leave the school, is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent. They develop a sense of responsibility through the roles they are proud to take on and many develop confidence beyond their years. Pupils are proud to help others in their community and beyond. An emphasis on healthy eating and physical activity has helped them to develop an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. They are also taught very successfully about how to keep safe.

Achievement is good. Pupils settle quickly and happily into the lower school class, where they make good progress in the Reception Year and most reach the standards expected of them nationally. This good progress continues through Years 1 and 2. They transfer successfully into the upper school class where they progress well through Years 3 to 6. Many reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave the school. Highly skilled teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure those who need extra help do well.

Good teaching, based on very positive relationships and an enriched curriculum, helps to ensure that pupils are interested and learn well. Adults know the pupils very well. However, occasionally, lesson planning does not result in enough challenge for the most able and marking does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils quite rightly say that their individual targets for writing really help them to learn and that they would like similar targets for reading and mathematics.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher has made an outstanding contribution, for example, by developing robust systems for checking how well the school is doing and continuing to drive school improvement forward. However, other leaders are not sharing a full role in self-evaluation and planning for the future. The classroom environment has improved greatly and now stimulates pupils' desire to learn more effectively. Improvement of the outdoor environment remains a priority in order that the Foundation Stage curriculum can be delivered more effectively.

Relationships with parents are very warm and positive because of the way the partnership between them and the school is valued and encouraged. It is no surprise that parents love the school. It is a valued centre for the small and sometimes quite isolated local community. One parent volunteered that 'both my children have settled into this lovely friendly school with ease. I have never had them say that they don't want to go to school. So I see that as a sure sign that they enjoy it. I'm very happy for my children to learn in such a good school'. The success the school has had in the past coupled with a determination to do even better, demonstrates that there is good potential to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the outdoor environment for the Foundation Stage curriculum.
- Introduce individual targets for mathematics and reading which are as effective as those already in place for writing, consistently ensuring challenge for the most able.
- Devolve leadership of the school so that leaders at all levels, including governors, play a full role in self-evaluation and school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils start school with attainment that is generally below that typical of most pupils of the same age. All pupils make good progress from whatever their starting point whilst they are at the school. Pupils are settled quickly and effectively in to school life and make good progress in their Reception Year. They enter Year 1, mostly having achieved what is nationally expected of them and having been well prepared for the next stage of school life. They continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and in the national teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 often reach above average standards. Pupils do well in Years 3 to 6 and in the national tests at the end of Year 6 generally reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties also make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, are outstanding. They value the many trips, visits and visitors the school provides and these activities really help to broaden their horizons and provide lasting memories. An effective programme of personal, social and health education and regular assembly themes ensure pupils develop an excellent understanding of and respect for different races and cultures. Pupils' responses demonstrate that they have been taught extremely effectively about their rights and responsibilities. The emphasis on active learning and work for the Healthy Schools Status has really paid dividends. Pupils are extremely keen to make healthy lifestyle choices. They make an outstanding contribution within and beyond their immediate community, for example, through 'playground buddies' and through their meaningful partnership with the local church. Pupils love school so it is no surprise that attendance is better than in most primary schools. Excellent personal skills and good basic skills prepare pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting. They use their good subject knowledge and effective questioning skills to develop pupils' thinking skills well and ensure they work hard. Good management of pupils promotes outstanding behaviour and relationships so that they gain increasing confidence in their abilities. Pupils enjoy their lessons and talk with enthusiasm about their work. Marking of pupils' work does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve. Teachers plan conscientiously, but occasionally this does not result in sufficient challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able. The school uses its able teaching assistants well to support groups and individual pupils so that those who need extra help also do well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of basic skills and a range of stimulating activities in other subjects which help to bring learning alive. The curriculum is beginning to be reviewed to promote the linking of subjects and the teaching of them in more imaginative ways. Pupils really enjoy this approach and say that it is when they do their topic work they learn best. This strategy is too new to be able to measure its impact on standards yet. The emphasis on promoting thinking skills through the focus on more practical activities has improved standards in mathematics. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used effectively to support pupils' learning. The curriculum is much enhanced by a range of visits and visitors and by the use of the local community and environment. Partnerships with other agencies such as the Peak Park, The National Trust and the local church really enhance pupils' experience. There is a good range of extra activities on offer for such a small school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Adults are extremely successful in ensuring that the pastoral care provided results in pupils' excellent personal development. Great emphasis is placed on the personal, social and emotional development of each pupil. Adults get to know children and families well and are extremely quick to respond to any worries. Pupils who find learning more difficult are well supported. Measures to ensure the safeguarding of pupils, including child protection, health and safety procedures, are robust. The academic guidance of pupils is satisfactory. Systems for measuring how well they are progressing overall are becoming more rigorous. Pupils are clear about their individual targets for writing and what they need to do to improve. At present they do not have targets for reading and mathematics and are not as clear about the next steps of their learning in these subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Highly effective leadership from the headteacher, supported by hardworking staff and committed governors, has ensured the school has continued to flourish. The contribution of the headteacher has been remarkable, given her considerable teaching commitment. Systems for assessment and tracking pupil progress have been given a sharper focus. There is a clearer picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, leadership is not being shared enough to make sure that everyone plays their full role in self-evaluation, school improvement and ensuring challenging targets are met. Strong partnerships are promoted with outside bodies which add considerably to personal and academic development and the care of pupils and their families. Considerable improvements have been made to the school buildings to better promote learning, including redesigned classrooms and the creation of a staff room. The outdoor environment does not yet match indoors in its suitability for delivering the Foundation Stage curriculum. The governing body are very supportive but not yet fully confident in their role to provide challenge.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | 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

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 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 | 2 |

The quality of provision

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|---|---|
| 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? | 2 |
| 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

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| 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 | 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 | 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

23 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Biggin CofE (VC) Primary School, Biggin, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 0DQ

I was pleased to meet you and all the staff and very much enjoyed the time I spent with you. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, talking to me and helping me to find out so much about you and your school.

I think you are lucky to go to such a good school where the headteacher and all the other grown-ups do their very best for you. They look after you and care for you well. Your teachers make learning interesting and enjoyable and they work hard to help you make good progress in lessons. Your excellent behaviour in class, around school and in the playground really helps you to learn well too. It is clear that you are very happy at school. Your teachers and your friends help you to feel important and safe there. In your tests, you often do better than pupils in most other schools. The school is very keen to find more ways to help you do as well as you possibly can. Though you already make good progress, I think you could do even better. I have asked the school to make sure that you have targets for your next steps of learning in mathematics and reading like the ones you told me you find so helpful in writing. I have also asked that those of you who find your learning more easy, always have work which challenges you to do as well as you can. I want the leaders of the school to continue the improvements they have already made to the building by making the outdoor learning area better for the youngest children. In the future, everyone at school is going to play their full part in finding out how well the school is doing and in helping to make it better.

I am sure that Mrs Gosney and all the other adults will continue to do all they can to help you. You can play your part by continuing to behave extremely well and working really hard.

I would like to wish you the very best for the future.

Joanne Harvey

Inspector