

Bishop Middleham C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114258
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	289855
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	102
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nigel Baines
Headteacher	Mrs Lindsey Vollans
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Bishop Middleham Ferryhill County Durham DL17 9AL
Telephone number	01740 651482
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. It serves an area which is varied in terms of social and economic advantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, whereas for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities it is above average. Attainment on entry to the school varies considerably from year to year because of the small number of children in each cohort. Overall, it is at the level expected for children of Reception age. Pupils are of mainly White British heritage and they are mostly taught in mixed age classes. Since the last inspection there has been unavoidable instability in staffing. A new headteacher has been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school is well led, has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and knows what needs to be done next. As a result, a dip in standards since the last inspection is being addressed.

In 2006, the school's national test results for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 were below average and achievement was inadequate. The school's records, the results of trial tests and assessments and the quality of work seen in pupils' books show that progress is now better than last year because of good monitoring and teaching. The work of subject leaders is good because they assess pupils' work regularly and take action when weaknesses are discovered. However, a lack of classroom assistants restricts the range of support that can be offered to pupils requiring extra help.

The pupils' achievement has accelerated so that it is satisfactory, despite recent disruptions to staffing. In the Foundation Stage the quality of teaching, learning and leadership is satisfactory, as is the children's progress. This means that by the end of the Reception year, children reach standards similar to those expected for their age. At Key Stages 1 and 2, standards are average but there is a relative weakness in writing. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise writing in a range of subjects and for different purposes.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Improvements in its quality have resulted in better progress in lessons and have reversed the underachievement of the past year. A few parents expressed concern about progress in mixed age classes. However, teachers plan learning activities that are matched to the different age and ability groupings. There is outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 where expectations are high and pupils are challenged to think for themselves. The relationships between teachers and pupils are good; work is interesting and motivates pupils to learn. Significant improvements have been made in the ability of all teachers to assess pupils' work accurately and to set appropriate learning targets for each pupil.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of pupils. In the Foundation Stage, outdoor provision lacks variety, challenge and creativity, restricting the scope of the curriculum for children to use and apply their developing skills outdoors. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors extends pupils' enjoyment and understanding of their work. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and the pastoral care extended to individual pupils is good. Pupils are receiving appropriate academic guidance. Procedures for employing staff and safeguarding pupils meet requirements. The headteacher and staff have good relationships with other agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe and secure. Behaviour is excellent and pupils have positive attitudes to their work. Pupils make a good contribution to their school community with the responsibilities they are given. They participate fully in village festivals and events, have close links with the church and raise money for charity. They have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, take plenty of exercise and eat healthy midday meals. Pupils' good understanding of the needs of others, together with their satisfactory literacy and mathematical skills, prepare them adequately for the next stage of their education and life beyond school.

Leadership and management are good. The measures introduced to reverse the underachievement of the past have resulted in good progress in lessons and clear signs that standards are rising. These improvements have been brought about in a short space of time;

good assessments, the rigorous tracking of progress and improvements in teaching and learning have resulted from the headteacher's excellent leadership. She is well supported by an experienced and capable acting deputy headteacher and staff who are committed to equality of opportunity for every pupil in the school. Because of recent improvements, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of the outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Improve the level of support available to pupils who need extra help.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress in writing

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. The children in Reception settle quickly and make satisfactory progress. By the time they enter Year 1, most children attain the standards expected for their age. In the 2006 national assessments and tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 the results were below the national average. Achievement was inadequate and the school did not meet its targets. Importantly the decline has been reversed.

Pupils in the current Year 2 and Year 6 are doing better than pupils last year because staffing difficulties have been largely overcome and there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Improved provision and stability of staffing have increased the rate of progress well considering the amount of ground made up in a short time. Achievement is satisfactory and, with consistently good teaching, there is the capacity to raise achievement further. This is needed in writing in particular. Internal assessments indicate that the school is likely to meet its performance targets at the end of Key Stage 1 and to exceed them at the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from early identification of their needs, appropriate intervention by outside agencies and support from class teachers. The few classroom assistants are deployed well in support of such pupils and work effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, are good. The school is a warm and supportive place where pupils say they feel safe and secure and that there is never any bullying or intimidation. Pupils' excellent behaviour adds much to their readiness to learn. Pupils have a good awareness of how to be healthy and take regular exercise and eat healthily. They say they enjoy coming to school and attendance rates are above average. Pupils readily take advantage of the opportunities for exercising responsibility in school, including membership of the school council and helping the youngest children during play and the lunch break. Pupils are also involved in many activities in the local community which show their concern for others and their increasing self-confidence. Pupils have satisfactory basic skills but are let down by their writing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good and brings about a good pace in learning. Strengths are in the outstanding teaching in Years 5 and 6 where expectations are particularly high. There have been significant improvements in the accuracy of teachers' assessments and the setting of appropriate learning targets. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Lesson planning is good because learning activities are graded in difficulty to meet pupils' different needs in the mixed age classes. Very good use is made of computer technology for teaching and for pupils to work independently. Pupils learn best when they are actively engaged in their learning and when they work with each other on tasks; for example, in art and design at Key Stage 1 where pupils had to handle natural objects and then try to capture their texture, colour and shape on paper. They made good progress because they could work together and experiment with the feel and shape of the objects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets statutory requirements and is mostly planned to ensure progression in pupils' learning year-on-year. The outdoor area for children in the Foundation Stage provides too few opportunities or resources to stimulate children's understanding of the world around them and for them to benefit from learning in the fresh air. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the many extra-curricular activities. This aspect of provision is good and the school uses trips away and visitors to the school to broaden pupils' understanding and enjoyment of their work. There are also good links with other schools to extend the curriculum. French lessons are provided in school by the local community college and pupils speak enthusiastically about the fun activities and the enjoyable songs and games.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school is warm and caring and the needs of every child are known by the adults. As a result, the pastoral care they receive from teachers and the small number of teaching assistants is good. There are, however, too few teaching assistants to provide extra support all of the time. Improved monitoring of pupils' progress ensures they receive appropriate academic guidance and are well prepared for the transition to the next stage of their education. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and health and safety requirements are met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. They are satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent because she has driven the improvements in monitoring and evaluation and in assessing pupils' work accurately. This has led to improved progress. Good support is given by the acting deputy headteacher whose own assessment skills are excellent and whose teaching is a model of good practice. They work with able and committed

staff and morale is high. Staff are willing participants in professional development and this aids their teaching and assessments. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and the school knows what it must do to improve. Governance is good. Governors exercise their monitoring role with improved rigour and have an increasing understanding of pupils' achievement levels and what needs to be done to raise the bar. The school is running a budget deficit but the plans agreed with the diocese and with the local authority will see it eliminated in the near future. The school is well served by the number of teachers. Teaching assistants work effectively but are too few in number to benefit fully the needs of all pupils who require extra help.

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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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	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.

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	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

30 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishop Middleham Church of England Primary School, Ferryhill, DL17 9AL

Thank you for welcoming me into your school and making a valuable contribution to the inspection. I enjoyed my two days with you and only wished that I had had more time to see the many interesting things you do outside of lessons. Please thank your parents who sent in their comments about how well your school is doing.

You work very hard and get on well together: your behaviour is excellent. I found out about the responsibilities you undertake and your involvement with local community activities. You also do a lot to help those less fortunate than yourselves through fund raising. You enjoy coming to school, feel safe and secure and find your work interesting. You are confident young people and have the personal qualities to make a success of your education.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education. You are reaching the standards expected for your age. This year there has been a rapid improvement in your progress in lessons, because of your hard work and the improvements that have been made to help you learn well. You will understand that it takes time for such good things to have a lasting impact but that the capacity for your school to get better still is good.

There are three things to concentrate on to improve: the outdoor facilities for the youngest children which are not very exciting; increasing the number of teaching assistants to help you with your learning and thirdly, your progress in writing which is not as fast as in other subjects. I am sure you will do your part in working hard at your writing.

Thank you again for welcoming me to your school. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead Inspector