

Banister Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116116
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	290422
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Jo Curd

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P McBride
Headteacher	Mrs M Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Banister Gardens Westrow Road Southampton SO15 2LX
Telephone number	023 803 93313
Fax number	023 803 93001

Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This infants school is much smaller than average. It is situated in an area which has accommodation for students, accommodation for refugees and two women's refuges. The proportion of accommodation for settled families is declining. The area also has a church primary school which many of the Nursery children move on to. Many children start the Reception class with little pre-school experience. The movement of pupils in and out of school in all year groups is much higher than average. Many incoming pupils have very little English or experience of school. The proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or who have English as an additional language or are from minority ethnic backgrounds are rising rapidly and are much higher than average. Over half the pupils currently at the school have English as an additional language. The reported number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average but does not include children below Year 1 or any at early stages of English. There has been a period of staff turbulence due to sickness and maternity leave recently and several subject leaders are relatively new to teaching and to the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development. Pupils are cared for well and most are very positive about their learning. As one Year 2 pupil said 'I like everything. I especially like all the hard work and jobs.' Whilst a parent said 'I have had two children at Banister and both have had an excellent start to their school lives there, they progressed well both academically and socially and I am sure Banister's and;quot;family feeland;quot; has gone a long way towards my children enjoying their time at school.'

Leadership and management are good. Despite considerable difficulties in recruiting experienced and suitable personnel, the headteacher has established a stable senior leadership team and school staff. Together, they now ensure that all pupils are well cared for, guided and supported and that they all achieve well during their time at the school. The senior leadership team have used external support well to ratify and develop their understanding of the school.

Self-evaluation is now good. Most aspects of the school, such as the quality of teaching and learning, have been monitored, evaluated and developed well, indicating good capacity for further improvement. However, some aspects of Nursery provision, notably the outdoor curriculum, have not received the same level of monitoring and are underdeveloped. Governors support and challenge the school well but are not yet involved in the direct monitoring of provision. Given the school's turbulence, improvement since the last inspection is good.

Children come to the Nursery with a range of experience, skills and understanding. Many have very limited English and low personal and social skills. As a group, their standards are below national expectations. Despite some weaknesses in the Nursery, provision in Foundation Stage overall is good. Children make good progress but because many children in the Reception class are new to school, have low starting points and have had little pre-school experience, standards at the end of the Foundation Stage are still below those expected nationally. Due to good teaching and a relevant, practical curriculum, pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Although teachers' clear marking shows pupils how well they have done, pupils are not always given time to correct mistakes and use these to reinforce their learning. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average. Given their low starting points and the considerable continuous movement of pupils in and out of school, this shows good progress.

Personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils behave well. Pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties or disabilities are supported and managed well. Most pupils enthusiastically enjoy their learning. They contribute well to their school community by helping with tasks around the school, offering their opinions and being 'playground friends'. Attendance is not seen as a priority by all the pupils' families and, despite the school's effective efforts, it remains below the national average. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe by eating sensibly, taking exercise and doing what they have been taught, for example, staying with their partner on school trips. They are well prepared for later life because of the good progress they make in learning and the social skills and confidence they gain during their time at the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve provision in the Nursery, especially the outdoor curriculum, by ensuring this is monitored, evaluated and developed effectively.

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that pupils have opportunities to correct and learn from their mistakes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are average. Standards, at the beginning of the Foundation Stage, are below national expectations. Because many pupils move to other schools and many new children start and leave in all year groups, the school population varies considerably. Assessments show that pupils who leave the school before the end of Year 2 tend to have been doing well. Conversely, many of those who start at other than the usual times tend to be struggling with academic work. Many children in the Reception class are new. Several have very limited English and little pre-school experience. Although, due to good provision, children make good progress in the Foundation Stage, standards at the end of this time remain below national expectations. Because of effective teaching and a very practical curriculum, good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. At the end of this time standards are broadly in line with the national average. Teachers have high aspiration for all the pupils and those who are more able successfully reach higher levels, particularly in reading and mathematics. Largely due to pupils' limited skills in English, few pupils reach higher levels in writing, but progress overall is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities or English as an additional language make good progress because of good support and the practical curriculum. Despite this some pupils who are very new to the school and are at very early stages of learning English remain at particularly low levels.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are enthusiastic, friendly, well behaved and, by the end of Year 2, confident. Most enjoy learning. When asked her opinion of school, one Year 2 pupil said 'I absolutely love it'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Because of consistent and effective efforts from the school, attendance has been rising over the past few years. However, largely due to the entry of new pupils, it has dipped again recently. It remains below the national average. Pupils contribute well to their school community through being class monitors, 'playground friends' and sharing their ideas and opinions on learning and the curriculum. These opinions and ideas are used well to shape learning, for example, in deciding which parts of topics pupils would like to revisit and investigate further. Children in the Nursery are sometimes less well engaged in outdoor play as the provision here is more limited.

Pupils have a good understanding of, and commitment to staying healthy through eating sensibly and taking exercise. Some pupils have made attractive leaflets informing their parents about healthy food for packed lunches. Pupils are successfully learning how to stay safe by doing as they have been taught and telling teachers if things go wrong. Pupils are well prepared for the future because of the good progress they make in learning, their good behaviour and the positive attitudes they develop towards work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are now good, successfully enabling all the pupils to make good progress. This is due to a more stable staff team and effective monitoring, evaluation and support, leading to steady improvement over recent years. Pupils are well behaved and most are eager to learn. Lessons are well organised and well prepared and time is used well for learning. Teamwork is good and learning assistants are generally used well. Marking is up to date and usually shows pupils how they can improve. Pupils are not always given opportunities to correct their work, however, so that learning is reinforced and so that pupils can learn from their mistakes. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally good, successfully inspiring motivation and enjoyment. As one parent said 'My child is very happy and I am very happy because the teachers are very kind and helpful all the time'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There is a good overall curriculum, which is broad and covers all the required areas. Some aspects of the Nursery curriculum, notably outdoor provision, are weak, however. The curriculum's emphasis on practical work and real life situations is particularly helpful to the many pupils who have limited English. The curriculum is well enriched through visits, visitors and a range of clubs which are popular with pupils. During the inspection, children in the Reception class were eagerly preparing for a trip to an aquarium, which they all enjoyed greatly. Links with parents successfully extend learning at home. As one parent said 'I particularly appreciate the weekly newsletter, where I can read what my child will be doing the following week and the more detailed ideas of activities to guide parents and children on the topic for the next few weeks.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

All pupils are cared for well in this small school. Systems for safeguarding health and safety are good. Pupils who arrive part way through the year, including those who speak little English or have little experience of schools, are welcomed and supported well through an established induction programme. Because of good care, guidance and support they generally settle and gain confidence quickly and well. Pupils of all ages with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties or disabilities receive good support through sensitive individual educational programmes. Behaviour is good because staff have high expectations and a consistent approach to all pupils. As one Reception parent said 'Banister is a lovely well run school. The children have firm but fair guidelines that can only put them in good stead for the future'. Pupils are guided well in their learning, through teachers' comments, praise and the use of targets identifying the next steps in English and mathematics. They are, however, not always given sufficient opportunities to correct or learn from, their mistakes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The long standing head and deputy headteachers are strongly committed to the care and development of all pupils in the school. Following a successful previous Ofsted inspection, staffing became unstable due to illness and maternity leave, and standards dropped. Teaching was less effective and achievement was just satisfactory. Over the past three years, however, the senior leadership team and governors have worked hard to recruit and develop the current stable and effective team. All the staff, including subject leaders, have developed rapidly, share the school's priorities and fulfil their roles well. Effective monitoring and support have ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is now good. Staff have high aspirations for all their pupils. Care, guidance and support are good and all but the youngest group have equal opportunities to succeed. Because monitoring of Nursery provision has been less effective, elements of this are underdeveloped. Links with parents are good and most are very appreciative of all the school does. As one said 'I am very pleased my daughter has had such a positive experience at the beginning of her educational life'.

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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	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?	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	2

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?	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

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	3
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

28 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Banister Infant School, Southampton, SO15 2LX

It was good to meet so many of you on my recent visit to Banister Infants. Thank you for being so friendly and for telling me so much about your school. It was a pleasure to see and hear how enthusiastic most of you are about your time there.

I think your school is good. All your staff, but especially your headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors work well to make things as good as they are. Because teaching, care and support are good you all make good progress in your learning and personal development. You are well behaved, polite and confident. The curriculum, that is, what you learn, is generally good but some parts of the Nursery, notably outside, are not used as well as they could be. All your teachers mark your books well but do not always give you time to correct and learn from your mistakes.

I have asked your staff to improve some things in the Nursery, especially how the outside area is used. I have also asked them to give you time to correct and improve any mistakes you make in your work as this is a really good way of learning.

Thank you again for your help. I wish you and your families the best for the future.

Jo Curd

Lead inspector