

Barlow Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121548
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	292155
Inspection date	27 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Les Schubeler

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Howden
Headteacher	Mr J Donnelly
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Park Road Barlow Selby North Yorkshire YO8 8ES
Telephone number	01757 618319
Fax number	01757 618319

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	27 March 2007
Inspection number	292155

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small primary school serving a small, isolated rural village. Recent housing developments have led to an increase in the local population. The number of children in the Foundation Stage this year has grown and is set to increase further. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. There are two mixed age classes in the school, but arrangements are made at times to teach the Key Stage 2 class as two separate groups. Staffing in the school has now stabilised after a period of disruption and difficulties in recruitment. The school has been awarded the ActiveMark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with some good features. It is an extremely harmonious community in which pupils behave well, attend regularly, enjoy their school experience and make good progress in developing their personal and social skills.

There are variations from year to year, but in most years, children enter the Reception class with skills below expectations for their age. They make good progress and by the end of Year 2, standards are usually average. In 2006, they were higher than average. At Key Stage 2, standards are variable. Pupils perform better in English and mathematics than they do in science. Progress is satisfactory in English and mathematics, where the school has placed a greater emphasis, but in science it is less secure. Pupils do not reach the higher levels in the national tests in all subjects often enough. The school now analyses more rigorously the performance of pupils. Challenging but achievable targets are beginning to accelerate progress. Standards at the end of Year 6 are average overall but are much lower in science than in English and mathematics. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there is some good practice throughout the school. Teachers know the pupils very well and relationships in the classroom are excellent. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. However, teachers do not always use their assessments of what pupils know and can do to plan work that challenges or stimulates the more able pupils. As a result, the progress of these pupils is impaired.

The school cares for its pupils very well. There is a real family atmosphere that enables children to settle in well when they arrive at the school. Pupils feel safe because they are confident that they have adults to turn to should any problem arise. They all get on well with one another and the older pupils show a mature readiness to look after the younger ones in and around the school. They have developed a good awareness of the need to eat healthily. They understand the importance of exercise and eagerly take part in sporting activities in spite of the shortcomings in the facilities for physical education. They willingly take on responsibilities and treat them seriously both in school and in the wider community.

Leadership and management are good and are a major influence on the school's improving performance. The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school. He provides caring and committed leadership that helps to create a positive ethos which enables pupils to flourish. He has succeeded in overcoming difficulties in staffing and recruitment. Despite the restrictions imposed by running a very small school, such as having a 70% teaching commitment himself, he has taken effective action that is improving the school's performance. Evaluation of the school's work is accurate and the process has been effective in developing among all staff a shared and determined commitment to raise standards. Thus, the capacity for further improvement is good. Parents place a high value on the work of the school. An active governing body supports and challenges the headteacher and helps the school to provide satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in science.
- Ensure that teachers provide sufficiently challenging work for the more able pupils in all subjects so that these pupils achieve as well as they should.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Children currently in the Reception class entered with average standards, an improvement on the past. Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. At the end of Year 2, standards have been broadly average in recent years with small improvements year on year, but in 2006, they rose to above average. At the end of Year 6, as a result of instability in staffing, difficulties in recruitment of teachers and variations in year groups, standards have been variable in the last few years. Standards in science are much lower than those in English and mathematics. In the national tests for the last two years, only one pupil has achieved success in English at the higher level, while in mathematics and science, there have been no successes at the higher level. The variations in performance in Key Stage 2 mean that progress overall in the school is satisfactory for all groups of pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils respond enthusiastically to the positive ethos of the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. School council members fulfil their roles with gusto and feel that they have a voice in the school. As a result of their actions, changes were made to the school uniform and extra sports and play equipment was purchased. Older pupils contribute well to the school community by organising activities for the younger ones. Their participation in fundraising events for charities develops a sense of social responsibility and an awareness of issues in the wider community. All of this, alongside their satisfactory progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), prepares them satisfactorily for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children are taught well in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, where they experience stimulating activities. As a result, they make good progress. In Years 3 to 6, there is some good practice, but the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall.

A common strength in classroom practice is in the variety of activities that teachers provide to sustain the interest of pupils. Teachers cope well with the mixed-age groups by planning the content of their lessons carefully to ensure that pupils do not repeat any work unnecessarily. A brisk pace ensures that pupils are kept on their toes. Good questioning helps to develop their understanding in graded steps. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.

Teachers track the progress of individual pupils and set them targets. By doing so, they have a clearer understanding of pupils' levels of performance. However, in Key Stage 2 particularly, they do not use that information effectively to prepare work that stretches the more able pupils. This results in more able pupils not making the progress they should. The marking of pupils' work celebrates their successes, but does not always give pupils enough specific guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. Children in the Reception class enjoy a wide range of well planned activities that enable them to make good progress in developing their mathematical, language and social skills.

In Years 3 to 6, subjects are linked well and include good opportunities for pupils to use and develop literacy and ICT skills in other subjects. Attractive displays evidence pupils' creative and imaginative skills. The inclusion of foreign languages in the curriculum also helps to broaden pupils' horizons. However, there are too few opportunities for more able pupils to achieve well. In science, for example, there is insufficient focus on the development of pupils' skills of investigation to challenge the more able.

The curriculum is well supported by a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that add excitement to pupils' learning and provide them with many opportunities to develop their personal qualities. Pupils speak highly of the annual drama and musical production, as well as their visits to York Minster, the Leeds Armouries and the theatre at York.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements to support pupils joining Reception and for those transferring to secondary school are handled well, so pupils feel at ease. The positive relationships with parents and the good levels of support from outside agencies contribute significantly to pupils' good personal development and satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and included in all aspects of school life. Arrangements for child protection, risk assessments and the vetting of all adults are in place.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. The information gained from monitoring pupils' progress is helping the school to identify underachievement and how best to support pupils in their learning. Some of the older pupils, in particular, are becoming more aware of their targets and of how to reach them, but the practice is not yet widespread throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher knows pupils and staff well. He inspires confidence and involves all staff in reviewing the school's performance. Consequently, morale in the school is high and all adults work together very well to help pupils mature and make progress. The good quality of its leadership and management is a major reason why this school is improving its performance. Outcomes in relation to pupils' personal development are good, underpinned by good care and support. The curriculum is developing strongly and in parts of the school, pupils are achieving well. The school has a clear view of how to achieve improvement and is beginning to see success for its efforts.

Good support from the local authority has helped the school to develop its self-evaluation procedures and identify necessary action. Good improvements have been made in tackling the issues from the last inspection report relating to the curriculum and the monitoring of pupils'

progress. The school's views of its strengths and weaknesses are realistic and honest. There has not yet been sufficient time to see the full impact of all the recent initiatives to raise standards, but current records show improvement emerging and the general picture is encouraging. There are strong and productive links with secondary schools, other small primary schools and the local playgroup. Good advantage is taken of some of these links so that pupils are not penalized by the school's small size. The early signs of improvement, together with the strong leadership of the headteacher and the good teamwork amongst staff mean that the school is well placed to improve further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

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	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?	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	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Barlow Church of England Primary School, Selby, YO8 8ES

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me when I visited your school recently. I would like to thank you for being so courteous and friendly. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out your views about the school. I spent a lot of time finding out how well you learn in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to your headteacher and school staff. I came to the conclusion that Barlow is a satisfactory and improving school.

I think your teachers and teaching assistants care for you and look after you well, keeping you safe and healthy. I know, too, that you are proud of your school and that you have worked hard to make sure that the school is an attractive environment.

It was very pleasing to see that you get on well with one another and all the adults who work with you. I was impressed by the consideration shown by the older pupils to the younger ones in the playground. I think that you are working well and are beginning to make faster progress than before. However, I think that you could do better in science and that more of you could reach level 5 in the national tests.

To help your school to improve further, I have asked your teachers to make sure that the work you are given in all lessons really stretches you.

I am sure that you will carry on enjoying school and continue to build on the improvements that you are making now. Most of all, I hope that you will continue to work hard and help all the staff to make Barlow an even better school in the future.