



Barrow CofE VC Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124690
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293079
Inspection dates 22–23 February 2007
Reporting inspector Marina Gough

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

Type of school	First	School address	Colethorpe Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Barrow, Bury St. Edmunds
Age range of pupils	4–9		Suffolk IP29 5AU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01284 810223
Number on roll (school)	123	Fax number	01284 810223
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr V Horsfall
		Headteacher	Mr J Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2002		

Age group 4–9	Inspection dates 22–23 February 2007	Inspection number 293079
-------------------------	--	------------------------------------

© 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 smaller than average size school situated in the village of Barrow on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds. Most pupils come from the local area. Pupils come from a mix of socio-economic backgrounds and are mostly of White British origin. The take up of free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average. When they start school in the Reception class the children's attainment is generally average, although there is some variation from year to year.

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 that has pockets of outstanding practice in areas of its work. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is very well placed for further and continued development. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and closely mirrors the inspection findings. The school provides good value for money.

One of the real strengths of the school is the way in which the headteacher and staff widen the pupils' horizons and encourage pupils to have open and enquiring minds. Pupils take part in an excellent range of visits, and benefit from the many interesting visitors who come into the school. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school are excellent. Pupils are very keen to learn, willing to tackle new learning, and happy and proud to be part of the school community. The school does much to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure, and has excellent arrangements for ensuring their well-being, health and safety, and for preparing them for the next stage in their education. As a result pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent.

The attainment of the Reception children when they start school is average. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are exceptionally high in reading and writing, above average in science, and close to the national average in mathematics. Although pupils make good progress in mathematics, and have a good grasp of number, some Key Stage 1 pupils have difficulty in explaining their mathematical ideas. By the time pupils leave school at the age of nine, they are attaining very high standards in all aspects of English, and good standards in mathematics and science. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good, and these pupils achieve very well.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and the teaching of literacy has some excellent features. Teachers make lessons interesting for the pupils so that they are enthused about their learning and keen to succeed. There is a strong culture of celebrating achievement within the school and pupils are very willing to persist when they encounter difficulties. The curriculum for Reception children is good, and structured play activities are used well to provide a meaningful context for their learning. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, although all subjects of the National Curriculum are covered, a disproportionate amount of time is given to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, leaving only a small amount of time for other subjects.

The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher who enjoys the full support of a hard working and committed staff. The school's involvement in a variety of local and national initiatives have had a most positive and beneficial impact on pupils' attainment and learning. Subject co-ordinators are very effective in managing their areas of responsibility. The governors are supportive and well informed about the school, but their role in monitoring the life and work of the school is under-developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the mathematical language of Key Stage 1 pupils.

- Make more effective use of the available teaching time in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Develop the governors' monitoring role.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From an average starting point when they begin Reception, pupils make good progress and achieve well. At the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in reading and writing is exceptionally high, and their attainment in mathematics is close to the national average. Over the years, pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 has been lower than in English. The inspection findings indicate that pupils have a good grounding in number, but that some have difficulty in explaining their mathematical ideas. Standards when pupils leave school at the end of Year 4 are very high in English, and good in mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported so that they can successfully achieve their individual targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils of all ages and abilities are very keen to learn, and show exceptionally high levels of enthusiasm in lessons. They are very willing to work in small groups, and to collaborate and co-operate when working on shared tasks. Pupils are polite, kind and considerate, and the pupils themselves say that 'Barrow is a very happy school where everyone helps everyone else'.

The pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is excellent. The school does much to raise the pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures, and well established links with a school in Cambodia provide an excellent opportunity for pupils to help others less fortunate than themselves. The school council plays a good role in identifying areas of the school that pupils would like to see improved, and pupils' ideas are treated seriously and with due consideration by the headteacher and staff.

The pupils say that there is very little bullying in school, and that it is a safe place to be. They are very committed to the idea of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of sports activities that are on offer. Pupils are very well prepared for their transfer to middle school, and make significant gains in terms of their maturity as they move through the school. Pupils love coming to school and attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The Reception children get off to a good start, and are inquisitive, confident and enthusiastic about the wide range of activities that is provided for them. Throughout the school teachers do much to make lessons stimulating and exciting for the pupils, especially in English where lessons are pacy, challenging and imaginative. In all classes excellent emphasis is placed on developing the pupils' thinking skills. As a result, pupils tackle new learning with very high levels of confidence. Teachers encourage pupils to find their own solutions to problems and promote good levels of creativity and imagination. There is scope for more emphasis to be placed on enabling pupils to develop their understanding and use of subject specific terminology in mathematics.

Assessment information is used very well to ensure that learning builds on what the pupils already know and can do. The match of work to pupils abilities is good, especially in the mixed Year 3 and Year 4 classes where there is a wide spread of maturity. Teaching assistants are used extremely well to support pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for the reception children is good, and is appropriately planned around the key areas of learning for this age group. There is a good balance of activities that are led by an adult and those that the children choose themselves. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 a great deal of emphasis has been placed on raising standards in English and mathematics. As a result, these subjects now have most of the available teaching time, and the school is aware that the allocation of time needs to be more fairly distributed amongst all National Curriculum subjects.

The way in which the school extends and enriches the pupils' learning is outstanding. Pupils enjoy taking part in an extensive range of exciting and very well planned visits which foster their cultural and social development very successfully. The school's links with the local community are excellent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides excellent levels of support, care and guidance, and pupils and their families are very well known to staff. The welfare and health and safety of pupils are the shared concern of staff and governors, and systems for child protection and ensuring the pupils' safety are very well established and fully understood by staff. Excellent links have been established with a range of external agencies which further enhance the pupils' well-being and safety.

The use of assessment information to track pupils' progress and attainment is very good. Staff track the pupils' progress on a regular basis so that they can identify those who are not doing as well as they should, and provide additional support where necessary. Both formally and informally the staff monitor those pupils whom they know are vulnerable, offering sensitive support as and when necessary.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong but sensitive leadership for the school. One of his main strengths is the way he looks to extend the pupils' learning beyond the boundaries of the small village in which they live. He has very successfully involved the school in several local and national initiatives which have significantly extended pupils' learning in terms of the development of 'thinking skills', sports activities and their knowledge of leading a healthy lifestyle. The headteacher is very well supported by two senior staff, and co-ordinators manage their subject areas efficiently and effectively. The way in which the staff work as a team is a real strength of the school.

Governors are very supportive, and take a good role in managing the finances, and in working with the headteacher and staff to identify priorities for school improvement. However, there have been some recent changes in the composition of the governing body, and so the plans for governors to formally monitor the school's work have not yet been fully implemented.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection, and it is very well placed for further and continued improvement. Its evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and closely reflects the inspection findings.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	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

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

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

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?	1

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.

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	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 February 2007

Dear Pupils,

Colethorpe Lane, Barrow, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP29 5AU

I am writing to thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school a short time ago. I have some really lovely memories of Barrow School, and was so excited to be featured in your weekly newspaper. I think your behaviour is excellent, and I am very pleased by the enthusiastic way you set about your work in lessons. You have some fantastic opportunities to go on visits which I know you love, and I was so pleased to be able to join in the tree planting ceremony on the village green. Your teachers do an excellent job in making sure you are safe and happy in school and they quickly give you some extra help if you need it.

The standards you reach in English are very good indeed, and you told me that this is a subject you like very much. In mathematics Year 3 and Year 4 pupils do very well, but Key Stage 1 pupils need to try to explain their ideas more clearly by using correct mathematical words. Standards in science are good in all classes. I am pleased with the way your teachers try to make learning fun, but I have asked them to spend a little more time on subjects other than English and mathematics so that you can get your teeth into other subjects more.

Your headteacher is doing a very good job in running the school, and is always looking for ways of doing things better. The governors are keen to get to know you all, and I have asked them if they could find the time to make some more visits so that they can see you in class and at playtimes.

Best wishes,

Marina Gough (Lead Inspector)