

Kings Oak Primary Learning Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134687
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	294151
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	John Rutherford HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	366
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Margaret Morgan
Headteacher	Miss Alison Wilks
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bondfield Close Wombwell Barnsley South Yorkshire S73 8TX
Telephone number	01226 272740
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Kings Oak Primary Learning Centre opened in 2005, following the closure of three schools. The centre operated on the sites of the three schools for a year prior to moving to a new building in September 2006. A new headteacher was appointed in 2005 and a significant number of new teaching appointments were made at that time.

The learning centre combines a children's centre for the birth to three age range with a school providing primary education for children aged three to 11. In addition, it provides a range of extended services well matched to the needs of the children, their families and the wider community. Its preferred title is a "learning centre". The learning centre has more pupils than most schools nationally. It serves an area of high social and economic disadvantage and the proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is well above average. Very few pupils are from a minority ethnic background or have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with a learning difficulty and / or disability (LDD) is well above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The learning centre is good and it is rapidly improving. There are some outstanding features. As a result of exceptional leadership and management, the learning centre has quickly established very high quality provision since moving into the new building. Teaching, and care, guidance and support are good overall with some of it being outstanding. The curriculum is outstanding. The impact of this is seen in recent improvements in standards. Overall, they were exceptionally low in Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2006, at the end of the learning centre's first year; this was a considerable improvement on pupils' performance previously. Inspection evidence shows that standards have continued to rise and that they are likely to improve still further. Most pupils are now making good progress, some are making outstanding progress and all, except the more able pupils, are achieving as well as they can. The very strong leadership and management, which are already bringing about considerable improvements in pupils' education, give the learning centre an outstanding capacity to improve further. It is providing good value for money.

Pupils make good progress because teachers use assessment information effectively to plan lessons that will help them to reach higher standards. Teachers set a good pace for the learning of new skills and they provide very interesting activities to consolidate them. Pupils' ability to carry out tasks independently and to discuss work with partners helps them to make good progress. Pupils have clear targets to aim for. However, marking does not make clear what they have to do next to improve their work or to get closer to meeting their targets. The curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' progress because it is carefully planned to match their interests and levels of understanding and much of it is exciting. Teachers use records of pupils' progress very effectively to plan support that meets the needs of less able pupils and those with LDD.

The learning centre uses its extended service resources and excellent partnerships with external support agencies to support its work in providing for the personal development and well-being of pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour, attendance and attitudes to work are generally good. They are developing a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe and how they can make a worthwhile contribution to the life of their community, especially through managing their emotions and developing constructive relationships. Pupils have skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) and working in a team that provide a sound foundation for their future economic well-being, but their low standards in literacy and numeracy hold back this aspect of their development.

The learning centre is working hard, and successfully, to build a good partnership with parents so that they can play a full part in supporting their children's learning. One third of the parents returned a questionnaire in preparation for the inspection. Of these, most are fully supportive of the learning centre. A significant number of them, however, raised concerns about pupils' behaviour, the leadership of the centre and the extent to which pupils' and parents' views are taken into account. The inspection found no evidence to support these concerns.

Senior leaders and governors are determined that the new learning centre will provide the highest possible standards of personal and academic development for the pupils. They have a clear vision for how they will do this and there is a unity amongst the staff in working towards this vision. Very effective coaching of staff contributes to this unity. Through rigorous self-evaluation, the senior leaders and governors have a very good understanding of the learning centre's strengths and what needs to be done next to improve standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in English and mathematics.
- Improve the achievement of more able pupils.
- Improve marking so that pupils know how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress and most achieve as much as they can. Standards, however, are exceptionally low at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, according to the most recently published figures in 2006. Although these figures are too low, they are a considerable improvement compared to 2005, and inspection evidence shows that they have continued to rise in 2007. Improving achievement in the younger age ranges show that end-of-key-stage standards are likely to continue rising in the future.

In the Foundation Stage, children start with skills well below those typical for their age. Those children who have spent both of their foundation stage years in the new learning centre have made good progress and their skills are much better as they move into Key Stage 1, though they are still below average. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the rate of progress by most pupils is better than expected and, for some, it is outstanding. Pupils who are working at average or lower levels are achieving as much as they can. More able pupils, while making good progress, are still not achieving enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and / or disabilities achieve well because their needs are identified at an early stage and good support is provided.

Standards in English are better than they are in mathematics, but because of a great deal of work done to improve the teaching of mathematics, the gap is closing very quickly. Because of the effective use of discussion in lessons, pupils are making good progress in developing speaking and listening skills. Standards in ICT are a strength of the school and they are broadly in line with the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As a result of outstanding provision, pupils' personal development and well-being have reached a good level within a year of them being brought together into one building. They are enthusiastic learners who enjoy lessons and do their best. They behave well during lessons and in other activities. Attendance has improved from being below average and it is now good. Pupils willingly do much physical exercise in school and they know which foods are healthy for them and which are not. They generally feel safe in school and, while some talk about bullying, they feel it is dealt with adequately. They learn how they can make a positive contribution to their community through such activities as the Sports Leaders programme and through providing assistance for children in their partner school in Kenya. Pupils' preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory overall; their skills in ICT and working in a team are good aspects, but their literacy and numeracy skills are still not high enough.

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. They are learning to reflect on their emotions, what causes them to be upset or angry and how to manage this in a constructive way. They are developing a good sense of how people need to behave in order to live together harmoniously in a community. Their ability to work co-operatively with others in lessons helps them to learn well. Writing and art show a growing awareness of cultures other than their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and some of it is outstanding. Lessons are generally well planned to give pupils the support they need to learn new skills at a good pace. This is helped by the effective use of ICT equipment in the classroom. Teachers' questions increase pupils' understanding because they usually make pupils think hard; they are the basis for good discussion between pairs of pupils and all pupils are required to come up with an answer on their personal whiteboard. Pupils are given interesting and effective activities, including problem solving or investigations, to consolidate their learning. In some lessons there is inappropriate use of worksheets to test pupils' understanding of new work.

Some teachers use very good methods for improving pupils' progress in lessons by explaining what they should be learning and regularly checking with them that they are on track to do so. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes. Marking does not give pupils enough information about whether they have understood what has been taught or what they need to do next to improve their work. In most classes, pupils work very well independently and as part of a group. Teaching enables most pupils to achieve well, but there is often insufficient additional challenge for the more able pupils. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress of the pupils with whom they are working.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The learning centre provides an outstanding curriculum. It meets all statutory requirements and is organised in a way that ensures pupils can make good progress in learning new skills whether they are in single-age or mixed-age classes. A very good balance of time is given to the different subjects, with a strong emphasis on physical activity to improve pupils' health. Subjects are linked together very skilfully where it helps pupils to deepen their understanding of a topic or to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Pupils are very interested in their work because it is directly linked to the local context, for example when learning about the recent history of the mining industry. A very strong feature is the way that teachers match new work to the needs and interests of the pupils by starting with an assessment of what pupils already know and involving them in planning what more they need to learn. Extended research projects, involving first-rate use of ICT, inspire pupils to work hard and produce very good work.

A broad range of extra sports, music and ICT clubs gives many pupils an opportunity to develop their individual interests. There is a very good programme of visitors to the learning centre, research in the local community and work further afield, including some residential activities. These are carefully planned to support learning during lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers monitor pupils' academic progress very thoroughly and use this information well to identify pupils with a learning difficulty or pupils working at average and lower levels who are at risk of falling behind. They plan support for these pupils that is precisely matched to their

needs and helps them to make good progress. Meeting the needs of more able pupils or those identified as gifted and talented is still at an early stage of development. All pupils have clear and understandable individual targets for reading, writing, mathematics and personal development. A strength of this is that the targets are discussed with parents so that they can support their children in meeting them. However, many pupils are not clear about how these targets influence their day to day work or what short steps they need to take towards meeting them.

Provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. This is because the learning centre uses its extended services and additional staffing to be a centre for the community, developing excellent partnerships with many external support agencies to work with children and their families. As a result, pupils have a wide range of professionals available to teach them important aspects of personal, social and emotional education, and to meet their more urgent needs as they arise. In addition, the learning centre and its partners give parents very good support in becoming effective partners in the education of their children.

The learning centre has secure processes for safeguarding pupils. Staff work well with parents to ensure that their children have a good introduction to the learning centre. The arrangements for preparing older pupils for their move to secondary school are good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders provide a very strong drive for raising the personal and academic achievements of all the pupils and the impact of this is seen in the rapid improvements being made; the new learning centre has been established and is running smoothly; there is a shared understanding amongst the staff about how they will work together to raise standards. The coaching provided for staff is exceptional and it contributes to most teaching being good or better.

Senior leaders continue to develop their own skills by participating in national leadership development programmes. They are also helping teachers to develop their skills as leaders in the teaching of subjects. These subject leaders are making a very strong contribution to raising standards by using an extensive range of monitoring methods to identify what improvements are needed in their area of responsibility. They prepare effective plans for introducing these improvements.

The evaluation of the work of the whole learning centre is rigorous, systematic and takes account of the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils. This gives senior leaders a very clear view of how effective the learning centre is now and what it needs to do in the future to be even more effective. Senior leaders are identifying successfully the priorities for improvement that are going to bring about significant increases in standards; their future planning for improvement is of very good quality.

Governors are strongly committed to raising pupils' standards and they make a very good contribution to the leadership and management of the learning centre. Communication between governors and learning centre leaders is excellent therefore governors have a detailed understanding of strengths and priorities for improvement. They are closely involved in planning how improvements will be made, and they often help to explain these to parents. They meet

regularly with learning centre leaders to learn about their work and to ask searching questions about its impact.

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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?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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	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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

Thank you for being so helpful to me and my colleagues, Alan Torr and James Reid, when we came to inspect your learning centre. Because you gave us so much useful information during our conversations, we would like to tell you what our judgements are.

Your learning centre is good because the headteacher and staff want the very best for you all and they help you to make good progress in your work. They give you very brisk, enjoyable lessons with plenty of interesting activities. They make sure that you are nearly always learning something new and not going over things you already know. Some of your work with computers is very good indeed. You have to take some of the credit as well for your good work in lessons. You are very keen to settle down and learn, you pay attention to the teacher and you try your hardest to answer questions correctly. You are very good indeed at discussing work with your partners and this helps you to learn more.

You have settled very quickly into your super new building and you are taking advantage of the many exciting activities that are being provided during and after lessons. The staff do their utmost to look after you in the learning centre and make sure that you are healthy and feel safe. They also make sure that there is support for you when you are feeling upset.

Even though the learning centre is good, your governors, headteacher and staff want it to be even better. To help them to do this, we have recommended that they work on three areas. Firstly, we have said that your standards in English and mathematics need to be higher, even though we can see that you have made great improvements in the last two years. Secondly, we have asked that some of you are given more difficult work because you are capable of doing it. Finally, we have asked your teachers to tell you exactly how you can improve your work when they mark your books. Seeing how well you have done during the last year, we are confident that you can rise to the challenge of working even harder and persevering with more difficult tasks.