

Barcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135081
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	294264
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Barbara Crane

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	389
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Hancox
Headteacher	Harjinder Bal
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Albion Road Willenhall WV13 1NF
Telephone number	01902 368132
Fax number	01902 606 008

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school was formed by the amalgamation of an infant and junior school in October 2005 and operates on two sites. Plans for the new school have been delayed. It serves an area within which families face some social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of families entitled to free school meals is higher than average. About a sixth of pupils are learning English as an additional language but only a tiny number are at an early stage of learning English. Several minority ethnic groups are represented amongst the pupils and there are a few children from traveller communities. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. Mobility amongst pupils is above average. Children's attainment when they start in the Nursery is well below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Barcroft Primary School provides a good education for its pupils and prepares them well for the future. Determined leadership by the headteacher has meant that the school has successfully weathered the challenges involved in amalgamation. Good teaching leads to pupils' good achievement. Standards are average by the time pupils leave the school. Progress is good for all ages and groups of pupils. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and build a firm platform for future learning. They gain a strong sense of confidence and independence. The staff are a talented team who readily take on new ideas. Their success in adapting teaching has meant that pupils at all stages do particularly well in mathematics and writing. Pupils' progress in reading lags behind these areas in Years 1 and 2. While teaching ensures that children have a very thorough knowledge of how different letters combine to make certain sounds, children's understanding of what they read is not checked as thoroughly as it should be. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent through the school and does not always ensure that pupils fully understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils of all ages with learning difficulties or disabilities benefit from good support and make good progress towards their targets.

Pupils are proud of their school and are brimming with enthusiasm for learning. This is because teachers are imaginative in their approach and make lessons varied and enjoyable. Staff know the pupils well and give them a good level of care, guidance and support to help them to overcome problems in their daily lives. Consequently, pupils trust adults and feel safe. Pupils' personal development and their well-being are good. Their good behaviour and relationships go a long way to creating the school's happy atmosphere. The good curriculum makes the most of pupils' talents in art and design, drama, sport and music. There are many exciting extra activities that pupils enjoy taking part in but opportunities for Foundation Stage children to learn through outdoor play are limited by the school's facilities.

Good leadership and management have ensured that the school keeps a close eye on how well it is doing. Good self-evaluation means that the school knows its priorities and how to achieve them. Its track record in improving pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics shows its good capacity to bring about change for the better. The school has not allowed the fact that it operates on two sites to stand in the way of a single approach to its work. The governors provide sound support. Good links with parents and other schools, as well as health services, are used to boost pupils' sense of well-being.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that Years 1 and 2 pupils' understanding of what they read is assessed more thoroughly to help plan the next steps for them.
- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently helps pupils to understand what steps they need to take to improve their work and reach their targets.
- Improve the outdoor provision for the Foundation Stage children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The average standards reached by the time pupils leave the school represent good achievement from their starting points. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, even though most do not reach the expectations for their age by the time they start in Year 1. They gain

confidence in learning and build skills in literacy and numeracy at a good rate. Standards are below average by the end of Year 2, but again, good progress is evident. Pupils who join the school late and the few from traveller communities do as well as others. Throughout the school, pupils make particularly good progress in writing and mathematics, reflecting the school's initiatives to boost achievement in these areas. Pupils make better progress in reading in Years 3 to 6 than in Years 1 and 2. This is because pupils' understanding of what they read is thoroughly checked in the older year groups. Good progress is made throughout the school by pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities because of well focused teaching. Some pupils with very specific needs make very rapid progress. The few pupils who are learning English as an additional language make good progress because their needs are taken into account. There is some good quality work in art and design and music, as well as in drama, reflecting the school's mission to provide a broad range of learning experiences for its pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are well prepared for the future because of their sound skills in literacy and their capacity to work together. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they develop a strong sense of responsibility. The school council decides how to spend its budget to benefit pupils and raises money through events to provide extra resources. Pupils trained as prefects take their role seriously and provide good support for others. The youngest children develop very positive attitudes to learning because they meet with success. Pupils are proud of their school and their excellent enjoyment of school is reflected in their thirst for learning, their relationships and sense of community. As one pupil put it, 'It's easy to make new friends here, because we work with different people all the time and everyone helps us.' Pupils' attendance is average but affected by pockets of low attendance that the school works closely with families to resolve. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and respectful to each other and adults. They know how to keep healthy by eating a balanced diet and keep fit through being active. Pupils relish competitive sport but say that taking part is as important as winning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high hopes for pupils. Pupils like their teachers and say that 'teachers put themselves out for us'. Teaching in the Foundation Stage successfully builds children's confidence and early skills in literacy and numeracy. Imaginative teaching captures pupils' interest and ensures that lessons are enjoyable. Pupils are eager to get started on work and to see it through. Teachers take good account of different abilities and the ways in which pupils learn. Support for pupils from traveller communities is effective. Teachers plan particularly challenging work in mathematics and writing consequently pupils' learning is faster in these areas. The precise teaching of how the sounds of letters combine means that pupils quickly learn to recognise words. Marking does not always give pupils a clear indication of what they need to do next to improve their work. Inconsistencies in providing clear guidance through marking means that some pupils are unsure of how to enhance their work. A talented team of teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities receive good support and many make rapid progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils' learning links together well. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils used their learning from history, literacy and music to practise for a performance. Both boys' and girls' progress well in writing when presented with themes that engage and interest them. For example Year 1 pupils wrote about pirate adventures. Plenty of problem solving activities in mathematics are planned to enable pupils to think carefully about their options to find solutions. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities in sport, the arts and dramatic performances does much to boost pupils' enjoyment of school. Residential visits in this country and abroad widen pupils' horizons. Older pupils enjoy learning German, French and Spanish. Uncertainty about the provision of a new building has meant that the school has not invested in outdoor areas for the Foundation Stage children. These currently lack stimulation for children's exploration of space and imaginative play. The links with other schools extend pupils' learning in a good range of subjects, particularly for those who are gifted and talented.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good relationships mean that pupils readily seek help from adults if they need to. The staff know the pupils well and provide a good level of daily care so that pupils feel well looked after. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils are robust. Good guidance over how to stay healthy is reflected in pupils' determination to lead healthy lives. Pupils have longer term targets but sometimes lack the guidance to understand the next small steps they need to make to meet them. The support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well organised and effective. Likewise, support for pupils from traveller communities is effectively planned. Advice from outside agencies, such as health services, is used wisely to support individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Much of the school's success is as a result of the headteacher's good leadership during an uncertain time. She has been at the forefront of creating a positive identity and purpose for the new school that pupils greatly appreciate. Good leadership and management provide effective support for the personal development of pupils as well as making sure that all pupils' progress benefits from what is on offer. The overwhelming majority of parents have confidence in the school and feel that it provides well for their children. The happy team of staff shares a common vision and the skills and confidence to carry out the school's planning for improvement. The staff's skills have been boosted so that they can reflect on practice and performance across the school to see where improvements are needed. In this way, the need to boost Years 1 and 2 pupils' comprehension in reading has been identified. The school is good at making sure that support is available to those pupils most in need. Governance is satisfactory. The relatively new governing body ensures that all of its statutory duties are met. Governors are working hard to extend their skills in providing the level of challenge to the school by asking pertinent questions.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barcroft Primary School, Willenhall, WV13 1NF

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and looking at your work. You go to a good school and we could see why your parents are happy that you go there. It is a happy and friendly place in which you do well in your work. We were pleased to see that you enjoy school so much. These are the things that make your school such a good place for you.

- You make good progress in your work and reach average standards because of good teaching.
- You showed us that you enjoy being with your friends, like your teachers and know how to keep healthy, safe and fit.
- You have a good curriculum and take part in lots of exciting extra activities.
- You are confident, polite and well-behaved young people who get on well together and enjoy helping around school.
- The staff give you help when you need it and you know where to turn if you have problems.
- The school is well run and the people in charge know what they need to do to make the school even better.

The staff want to get the best for you. We have asked them to make sure that they check how well the pupils in Years 1 and 2 understand what they read. We have also asked teachers to make sure when they mark your work that they help you to understand what you need to do to improve it. This will help you to reach your targets. Lastly, we have asked that the children in the Nursery and Reception classes have a more exciting outdoor area so that they can have more fun outdoors. You can do your bit to make your school great by carrying on working hard. Thank you again for helping us with our work and good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Barbara Crane Lead inspector