

Beal Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105672
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308916
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	197
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Richards
Headteacher	Mr John Richards
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Salts Street Shaw Oldham Lancashire OL2 7SY
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than average. About one in five pupils is from a minority ethnic group, chiefly Asian British Bangladeshi or Pakistani. About half of these children are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school has the Healthy Schools Award, the Activemark and the Eco-Schools Award (Bronze).

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 school. It makes good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The personal development and well-being of pupils, the curriculum, and care, guidance and support are also good. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, as is teaching and learning.

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Children enter the Nursery with attainments below those expected for their age. However, they achieve well and their standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average by the end of Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2 progress is slower than in Key Stage 1 and achievement is satisfactory rather than good. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school in Key Stage 2 has been a significant factor in this slower progress. By Year 6, standards are broadly average in English and science and show recent improvement because they have benefited from the impact of good initiatives to develop pupils' writing and investigative skills. Standards in mathematics have not improved in the same way because initiatives to improve teaching and learning have not been as successful. While the great majority are predicted to reach the level expected of pupils in Year 6, progress is less marked in mathematics than it is in English and science.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave very well. They are well aware of personal safety and how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils get involved well in community activities, such as a scheme to regenerate the local park. Attendance is satisfactory. Levels of attendance have been rising since the last inspection. The great majority of pupils attend well. However, a very small minority attend poorly. The school cooperates with other agencies to address this problem and its procedures to improve attendance are satisfactory. However, more needs to be done to raise levels of attendance. The care, guidance and support the school provides helps all pupils, especially the more vulnerable, to thrive in their personal development, to know how well they are getting on and what they should do to improve.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and has a number of good features that have developed in recent years, for example, the teaching of writing and teachers' use of information and communication technology (ICT). However, the pace of learning in some mathematics lessons is not brisk enough and pupils' learning is held up by too much repetition. The curriculum is enriched with several innovative aspects such as developing speaking, listening and thinking skills through lessons in personal, social and health education and philosophy for primary aged pupils.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and senior leadership know the school well and are broadly accurate in their evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school has shown that it has a satisfactory capacity to improve by what has been accomplished since the last inspection. Effective steps have been taken to develop pupils' skills in writing and science. Additional learning opportunities for pupils have been put in place. The roles and expertise of subject coordinators have been clarified and developed. However, the benefit to pupils' learning brought about by new initiatives is not evaluated with sufficient rigour. Governance is good, resources are used efficiently and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good with some outstanding features. Dedicated staff and strong leadership help children to achieve well. Children quickly settle into school, whether they join in the Nursery or Reception class. Parents are welcomed as partners in their children's education. A well planned curriculum and good teaching mean that by the end of Reception year, many children reach average and above average levels in their development. Throughout the provision children's enjoyment of learning, and their personal development and well-being are of great importance. Liaison with other agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of the children is good. Staff have high expectations and promote good emotional and social skills. Good use is made of role play to promote social learning, mathematical, communication and language skills. For instance, learning opportunities with masks and musical instruments put a new twist to the story of The Three Little Pigs. Or in another example, similarities and differences between the present and the past are explored when a visit to a modern launderette is experienced along with washing days in Victorian times. Consequently, children delight in their time here, gain positive learning attitudes and develop cooperative learning skills. Account is taken of the multiple needs of children from entry and this is sustained throughout their time in Nursery or Reception. Boys in the Reception class develop particularly well and have a very positive, buoyant and supportive role model to take their lead from. Care and welfare are good, assessment is thorough and planning is rigorous. The outdoor provision is a positive development since the last inspection and is creatively used for problem solving, numeracy activities and picnics.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Raise levels of attendance.
- Take steps to measure and evaluate more rigorously the effectiveness of initiatives to improve pupils' learning.

A small proportion of the schools where overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils get off to a good start in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Key Stage 1, standards are above average. This has been a trend over a number of years. However, the significant number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the start of the key stage has been a significant factor in lowering standards and slowing progress in Key Stage 2. Those pupils who have attended the school the longest make at least satisfactory progress in English and science in Key Stage 2 and reach the challenging targets set for them. Pupils' progress in mathematics is slower. This slower progress is linked to the pace of teaching. While measures taken to improve pupils' writing and their investigative skills in science have had a positive impact, measures to improve teaching and learning in mathematics have not had sufficient effect. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress; those with a statement of special educational need make good progress because of the individual and small group support they receive. The few pupils who start school with little English make rapid gains in acquiring the language and then make similar progress to other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. A particular strength is the pupils' awareness of moral and social issues through the impact of regular school assemblies and opportunities in lessons of philosophy and personal, social and health education to ask questions and reflect upon beliefs and values. Pupils report they really enjoy coming to school because of the friendly welcome they receive and the interesting lessons. Levels of attendance have been rising since the last inspection but for a small minority of pupils attendance is poor. As school councillors, participants in environmental projects and keen recyclers, pupils make a very good contribution to the life of the school and the community. Pupils understand how to stay safe and they know what is required to live a healthy life. They make sensible choices about diet and exercise both in school and in their own time. Many take part in sporting activities and games. The school has gained the Activemark for this aspect of its work. The pupils develop good skills of cooperation, independence and basic literacy, and satisfactory skills in numeracy that contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good elements. Teaching is generally good in Key Stage 1 and this leads to good achievement and above average standards. Improvements in teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 have led to improved standards of writing in particular. Strengths of the teaching lie in relationships between pupils and adults that support pupils. Teachers make good use of ICT to add variety and interest to lessons. Teaching assistants work effectively within class to give support to those with additional learning needs. However, in some mathematics lessons the pace of learning is not brisk enough and pupils spend too long on one teacher-led activity. This leads to some pupils becoming bored. In addition, teachers' planning leads to pupils carrying out too many calculations of the same kind and pupils do not advance quickly enough to more challenging work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Strengths of the curriculum include the focus on developing pupils' speaking, listening and reasoning skills. This leads to pupils being able to pursue and explore a line of enquiry, work as a team or individually and make a cogent presentation to their classmates. In personal, social, and health education and philosophy lessons they gain confidence in their own ideas and abilities. For example, pupils in Year 5 explored the idea of anxiety, framed questions such as, 'Why don't people share their worries?', 'Can worries be a good thing?' and, 'Where do worries come from?' They then voted on which question would give them the most ideas to pursue. Other strengths of the curriculum include ICT, art and the use of stimulating visits to places of interest at the start of topics. There is a variety of clubs and activities that take place after school to promote fitness and health. This provision has been recognised in the Healthy Schools and Activemark awards the school has gained.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding learners are in place and meet current government requirements. The school has robust measures to counter racist attitudes and this is exemplified in the work of the pupils who form the REVELS team ('Race Equality Values Every Life as Special') and who have produced, amongst other things, a children's book on bullying. Parents have confidence in the way the school keeps their children safe and corresponds with them about their own child's welfare and progress as well as the wider developments in school. There are very effective links with agencies and other schools to benefit pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the most vulnerable and those who need help to learn English as an additional language. Procedures to assess pupils' progress are good and lead to clear targets for pupils, which they understand. As a result, older pupils, in particular, have a good awareness of how to improve their work, especially writing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Leadership from the headteacher has had a good impact on improving and developing the role of middle managers and on maintaining standards. The leadership team has worked hard to develop a stimulating curriculum. The school is self-critical and has identified areas of learning that require greater attention. As a consequence, many initiatives and developments have been implemented to address these issues. However, the impact of these initiatives is not always fully monitored and evaluated and the school is, thereby, deprived of important information to help it improve further. Governance is effective. Governors provide good support and appropriate challenge through regular meetings, sub-groups, visits and discussions. The school's contribution to building community cohesion is good and is particularly strong in the school community itself and in its role with partners in the wider community. The school, in a natural reflection of its positive ethos, promotes equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination well.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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 Beal Vale Primary School, Oldham, OL2 7SY

I would like to thank you very much for your help when we inspected your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. Now we would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. These are some of the things that are good or better.

- All the staff take good care of you and help you all to be fit, safe and healthy.
- You want to learn and are growing into sensible students who take on responsibilities, for instance, as school councillors and members of the REVELS team.
- You behave very well in class and around school.
- You are doing well in speaking, listening and reasoning thanks to the lessons you have in personal, social and health education and philosophy.
- The staff organise very interesting visits out of school and projects in the local area for you all.

Part of my job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better. There are three things I have asked the school to do.

- Make sure you all do as well as possible in mathematics.
- Make sure you all attend school as regularly as possible.
- Make sure that teachers check how effective the various programmes of work are that they have introduced to help you to learn more.

You have a part to play in this: attend school regularly because your education is so important, work hard in lessons and do your very best! Most important of all, carry on enjoying school!