

Belfield Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105780
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	308947
Inspection dates	2–3 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Dodgson
Headteacher	Mrs Irene Maguire
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Samson Street Belfield Rochdale Lancashire OL16 2XW
Telephone number	01706 341363
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Belfield is a large school serving an area with high levels of social and economic deprivation. A range of community services share the site, including a Children's Centre, a public library and a Police and Community Liaison facility. Over half of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, much more than the national average. About one third of the pupils is White British. One third is of Bangladeshi origin and one third is of Pakistani origin. Nearly half the pupils speak English in addition to their home language, and most of these are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Belfield is a good school that gives good value for money. It has outstanding features such as the care, guidance and support children receive. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher, supported by staff, governors and parents has established a harmonious community where children learn and play happily together. A very strong ethos of respect and tolerance between the different cultural groups permeates throughout the school. Parents are very supportive of the school and feel welcomed as partners in their children's education.

All children achieve well because teaching is good and, in their own words, 'We're always meant to do our best'. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those usually found at their age. They progress well in this phase and continue to make good progress throughout the school - particularly the oldest children where teaching is strongest. Progress, although still good, is slower in Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, children's limited communication skills often hinder progress in all subjects. Standards have gradually risen over time. The majority of children reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning English receive well targeted and skilled support. Consequently, they progress well in relation to their capabilities.

Children's personal development is good. The school has received national recognition as a 'body-and-mind' health promoting community and has received several other national awards. Consequently, children have an excellent understanding of how to care for their health. Behaviour is good. Children feel safe in school and show high levels of concern for others because they are cared for so well. They become sensible members of the community, eager to take on responsibilities and tasks. Suitable academic skills and enterprise activities prepare children well for their future economic well-being.

The excellent curriculum provides a very rich range of learning experiences that meet the needs of all children very well. Children say they really enjoy all the extra activities, especially the visits and the clubs, and this helps them make good progress in school. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure every child feels he or she really matters as an individual and has the confidence to achieve well.

Leadership is good. Staff and governors have an accurate view of the school and work closely together to improve and enhance its provision. Their commitment to ensure equal opportunities for all children is excellent. The headteacher's clear vision for on-going school development has been the driving force behind the very good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have risen and excellent assessment systems give staff a very clear picture of how well each child is doing and where to plan the next steps in learning. Consequently, the school is well placed for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision ensures all children make good progress. Most start school with very limited language and personal and social skills, vital areas for successful learning. Very good care ensures children feel very safe and secure in the warm, welcoming atmosphere. They soon learn the simple routines, and happily share and take turns. They particularly enjoy learning outdoors and the physical activities. Good teaching provides a very rich range of learning activities that

appeal to their natural curiosity. Because they have such a lot of ground to cover, very few children reach the levels typical for their age when they move to Year 1. This is most noticeable in language skills and understanding which are slow to develop, especially for those children who do not attend regularly. However, children make very good progress in their personal and social development and most reach levels typical for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress in Key Stage 1.
- Develop pupils' spoken language skills to raise attainment in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most children enter Key Stage 1 with attainment below that usually found at their age, particularly in language and communication. Many children find it hard to express ideas or explain how they reached an answer. Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 1, although there has been a gradual improvement over time. Few children reach the higher levels. Mixed-age classes with Reception and Year 1 children taught together benefit the younger ones but can slow progress slightly for the older ones. Progress speeds up in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 6, due to strong, challenging teaching. Standards have risen over time, and in 2006 were above national averages at the expected level in English, mathematics and science. Although results fell slightly in 2007, children still met their targets in English and mathematics. Older children read well, but do not always fully understand what they read. This hinders their ability to answer questions fully in tests and so few reach the higher levels. Work seen in the current Year 6 indicates some improvement in all subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They enjoy a wealth of activities that extend and enrich their cultural experiences, including French and many visits. Children also take full advantage of the impressive variety of opportunities which the school offers to promote spiritual development, ranging from a prayer room to workshops led by professional artists. The Eco Award demonstrates strong concern for the environment; children know they must help by putting fruit leftovers into the compost. Children eagerly participate in lunchtime games and sport and know this helps them stay healthy. They say bullying is not a problem and they feel safe. Their ideas for closed circuit cameras and Playground Pals have been incorporated into site-safety measures. They show commendable levels of concern for others, raising funds for the local hospice and organising the mini-enterprise scheme that provided 42 goats for African farms. Children clearly enjoy school and talk happily and politely to visitors. However, attendance levels do not meet national averages despite the school's very best efforts to improve attendance and punctuality. This adversely affects the progress of children who do not attend regularly and on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Children enjoy learning because teachers make lessons fun and, as they say, 'We like the work'. Pupils' needs are met because the teachers know the children well. Effective use of praise reinforces self-esteem and develops confidence. Clear explanations ensure children understand what they have to do and targeted questioning provides extra challenge. Interactive whiteboards make learning more exciting. Teaching assistants give good quality support to children with additional learning needs and those at an early stage of learning to speak English. Assessment is used well to check progress and marking gives children clear guidance as to how they can improve. However, there are some inconsistencies in teaching. In the best lessons, the teacher's very good subject knowledge challenges and stimulates children to produce work of high quality. Lessons are less successful when lengthy explanations slow the pace so children lose concentration and do not get enough time to complete tasks and consolidate their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum is very rich and broad. Close attention is given to the basic skills which support learning in all areas. Skills are often developed by linking subjects together. For example, children used the computer to write about the Victorians. Specialist teaching is used very well, particularly in the arts and physical education, reflected in the school's acquisition of the Artsmark and Activemark. A very wide range of visits and visitors to the school enrich and enhance learning most effectively. Residential visits are arranged for children in Years 5 and 6, who also enjoy learning French. Very good provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those in the early stages of learning to speak English and higher attaining pupils ensures they progress well. The curriculum supports personal and social development very well. An excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles is exemplified by the school's Healthy School status. An extremely good range of extra-curricular activities adds to children's enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff work closely as a team to ensure the best possible pastoral care for every child. Parents are welcomed as partners and very good relationships between home and school aid learning. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are very robust. Governors take their health and safety duties very seriously, so the school building is a safe, attractive, well maintained environment in which to learn. The school provides a variety of quality activities which support children's social and emotional needs, for example, dinosaur school, peer massage and pyramid club. These initiatives are an integral part of the successful drive to remove barriers to learning, boost children's self-esteem and raise attainment. Children know their targets and understand why they are important. Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those in the early stages of learning to speak English is very good. Since the last inspection, the school has made excellent progress in overhauling systems to track and monitor how well the children are learning. Staff make very good use of this information to set targets and swiftly direct extra help where needed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is held in high regard by parents, who find her very approachable and helpful. She has the full support of the skilled, experienced leadership group, the governors and all staff. Their commitment has resulted in rising standards, a rich and broad curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support. Some middle managers are very new to their roles and have yet to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. The school evaluates its performance well. Challenging targets form the basis of future development plans, performance management objectives and professional development for all staff, supported by shrewd budget management. Governance is good. The well-informed governors challenge and question the school. Thorough understanding of the needs of the children enables them to make a valuable input to improvement planning. Excellent regard for equality of opportunity ensures all children learn well and participate fully in all school activities. Strong working partnerships with local schools and external agencies and the use of specialist teaching benefit all pupils; most particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the early stages of learning to speak English.

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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
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	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?	1
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.

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I would like to thank you all for making the other inspectors and me so welcome when we visited your school. It was a real pleasure to meet so many smiling, polite and friendly children. Your parents told us how much they like your school. We could see that you enjoy your lessons and are very proud of your school. You are glad that you go out on so many trips, and a lot of older children told us how much they are looking forward to going to Paris next year. Many things really impressed us, especially the way you try so hard to help others in school and around the world. I thought I would tell you what we found.

- Belfield is a good school.
- The headteacher is an outstanding leader.
- You work hard and make good progress and reach the right standards for your age by the time you leave.
- You have good teachers who care for you extremely well.
- Your behaviour is good, you really understand how to be healthy, look after each other very well and feel safe in school.
- Lots of extra activities make school even more interesting for you with clubs, sports and visitors.

We have asked the school to help the children in Year 1 and 2 to progress even faster. We have also asked the teachers to help you improve your spoken English to give you more language skills.

You can help them by always listening carefully, doing your best to work hard and making sure you all come to school on time every day.