

Beech Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106399
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	309115
Inspection dates	15–16 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	257
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Willis
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Seddon
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Netherby Road Beech Hill Wigan Lancashire WN6 7PT
Telephone number	01942 243582
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized primary school in an area of relatively high social and economic disadvantage. Pupil numbers have declined since the last inspection. Most children are White British. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also well above average. A high proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school has undergone some considerable disruption in leadership and management with three headteachers since the last inspection. The current headteacher was appointed to the permanent position in September 2007 after spending two terms as the temporary headteacher. The school has gained the Healthy School, Sportsmark, Activemark and Early Years Kite Mark Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Standards are exceptionally low and pupils' achievement is inadequate. Since the last inspection in 2004 there has been a downward trend in the standards reached by pupils. The school's results in the 2007 national tests and assessments in Key Stage 1 were its lowest in five years. Results at the end of Key Stage 2 also showed a further decline on previous years in English, mathematics and science. This overall decline of the school since the last inspection, when it was judged a 'good school', is a concern expressed by a significant number of parents. They feel their children do not make enough progress and that the school does not take enough notice of the views expressed by parents and pupils.

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. There is too much inadequate teaching and too little teaching that is good or better. Teachers' skills in assessing what pupils have learnt and understood are weak. Despite this, pupils enjoy school and most of their lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has devoted time to reviewing its curriculum, in line with government recommendations, to make lessons more interesting and to develop links across subjects where possible. Whilst this has resulted in pupils' greater enjoyment, there has not been a similar focus on ensuring they achieve well enough. In particular, the significant weaknesses in the core skills of literacy and numeracy undermine the work done elsewhere by the school.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and is a positive starting point for improving their academic achievement. Attendance, which was an area for improvement following the last inspection, has improved and is now in line with the national average. The care, guidance and support offered to pupils are inadequate because the academic guidance given to pupils is too weak to help them improve their learning. Whole-school systems for checking the progress made by pupils and setting challenging targets to raise standards are not used effectively enough to enable pupils to reach their potential. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of recently introduced procedures for identifying their stages of development. As a result, work is better matched to their needs and their progress is monitored more accurately.

Leadership and management are not strong enough at all levels to have sufficient impact on improving pupils' achievement. Senior leaders do not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. The school judged itself more positively than the inspection findings in virtually all aspects. Governance is inadequate. Although governors are supportive, attendance at meetings is variable and they have not held the school to account rigorously enough to bring about improvement in its performance. The school has made insufficient progress on the areas for improvement that were identified at its last inspection, for example, the use of assessment and tracking, the role subject leaders play in improving their subjects, and low standards in writing and science. The school gives inadequate value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Most children join the Nursery with skills below those typical for their age. Mathematical and communication skills are particularly weak. A lively, stimulating environment, good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants, and recently improved links with the parents, ensure that children get off to a good start. Adults make the most of every opportunity to help children to learn to get along well together, grow in confidence and behave well. Consequently, by the time they start in Year 1 they have made good progress, particularly in their letters and sounds and problem solving skills, although standards overall remain below those expected. Leadership and management are good. Staff communicate regularly and are clear about how well individual children are getting on. Staff make effective use of their records of the small day-to-day steps in children's progress when planning activities that help children to build on what they can already do. However, this information is not always used well enough to identify where children's progress might be accelerated and to pinpoint how the curriculum could be adjusted accordingly, particularly in the Reception class.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science in all year groups.
- Eradicate inadequate teaching so that the overall quality improves enough to ensure that all pupils learn effectively.
- Improve the use of assessment and target setting to help pupils reach their potential.
- Ensure leadership and management at all levels are strong enough to improve pupils' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

In Key Stages 1 and 2 standards have been too low for too long and achievement is inadequate. On all measures the school has been in decline for several years, with the gap between its performance and the national figures widening, particularly at Key Stage 1. Data provided by the school show that, whilst recent steps taken to accelerate progress have helped some pupils in Key Stage 1, for large numbers of others there is limited progress over an academic year. This is particularly noticeable for the more able pupils. In Key Stage 1, results in reading, writing and mathematics have fallen sharply since the last inspection. This means that too many pupils move into Key Stage 2 without enough knowledge to become confident readers and writers. The work observed in lessons and in pupils' books confirms this. In Key Stage 2 pupils' writing is poor in content and presentation. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low: there is too much reliance on pupils completing worksheets which restrict both their independent learning and their enjoyment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. They enjoy coming to school, as can be seen in their improved attendance and good attitudes. Pupils' behaviour is good and they get along well with their teachers and each other. They move around the school and playground spaces safely and sensibly. Most pupils

say they feel safe. Some pupils express concerns about bullying but say there are many adults that they can report this to and know that it will be dealt with quickly. Older pupils make a positive contribution to school life as play-leaders, class monitors and reading buddies or through their work as members of the listening council. They contribute satisfactorily to the community through charitable fund-raising. Most children know how to keep themselves safe and understand that a healthy diet and regular exercise contribute to a healthy lifestyle. The school holds the Sportsmark and the Healthy Schools Awards, which recognise pupils' commitment to improving their health. However, pupils are not adequately prepared for the next steps in their education because of their weak academic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Most teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not always plan work that will help pupils move from one level to the next in their learning. Assessment information is not used effectively, so tasks set are often too easy, especially for the more able pupils. Consequently, the pace of learning for most pupils is much too slow. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of recently introduced procedures to improve the provision made for them and monitor their progress. There have been recent efforts to improve teaching but the impact is inconsistent across the school. There is too much inadequate teaching. Teachers are beginning to check on the progress made by pupils but targets lack sufficient challenge and evaluations of progress are not securely in place. There is some good teaching. In these lessons, expectations are higher, the pace is brisk and the benefits of the school's efforts to improve standards in speaking and listening are evident. Pupils' confidence in taking part in class discussions is developing. Most resources are used well, although insufficient use is made of the school's impressive information and communication technology resources to engage pupils in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is adequate and enables pupils to enjoy their work and to learn how to stay safe and healthy. Although the school has responded to national guidance about making learning more meaningful, the impact of this development is variable and it is too early to say whether the revised curriculum will result in raised standards and better achievement. Gaps in the provision for literacy and numeracy mean that standards in these basic skills are not rising quickly enough. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a residential trip, enrich pupils' learning. Pupils are keen to participate in sports and the school has a strong focus on healthy eating and lifestyles. Work in personal, social, health and citizenship education contributes well to pupils' good behaviour and ensures that they work and play together happily.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Procedures for protecting and safeguarding pupils are in place; incidents of bullying are usually dealt with quickly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from extra support in lessons from teaching assistants and learning mentors and welcome the opportunities they have to access the nurture room. This ensures they make satisfactory progress in their personal

and academic development. However, the academic guidance for the vast majority of pupils is inadequate. Staff have been slow to track accurately pupils' progress and set learning targets to accelerate progress to enable pupils to achieve the standards they are capable of. Pupils do not always know what their targets are and what they need to do next in order to reach them. Teachers' marking is too variable and does not always give pupils sufficient guidance about how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The recently appointed headteacher has been instrumental in seeking support from the local authority. Together they are beginning to address issues of underachievement. The senior leadership team has met initial reluctance from some staff in establishing a common sense of purpose within the school to bring about improvement. Staff have been slow to recognise their corporate responsibility for raising standards and for the regular monitoring and tracking of the progress pupils make. The school's self-evaluation is inaccurate and governors are not sufficiently rigorous in holding the school to account for the standards achieved. Issues raised during the last inspection have not been dealt with effectively. Weaknesses in teaching and the use of assessment are major factors in preventing pupils doing as well as they should. Some initiatives put in place this academic year have led to improvement. These include improvements in the Foundation Stage and in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as improved attendance levels. However, with the inadequacies in leadership and management at all levels in monitoring the school's performance, there is insufficient impact on raising standards. The school does not, therefore, demonstrate the necessary capacity to improve.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Beech Hill Community Primary School, Wigan, WN6 7PT

As you know, inspectors visited your school to check on how well it is doing. Thank you very much for the way you welcomed us into your school. We enjoyed talking to you and found you helpful and friendly. Although there are some good things happening in your school, we came to the decision that it needs extra help to give you the education you deserve. We have recommended that the school needs 'special measures'. This means that, as well as receiving extra help, inspectors will make visits to Beech Hill to check that improvements are being made fast enough.

These are the things we thought were good.

- You behave well in lessons, try hard and most of you enjoy school.
- You get on well together and willingly take on jobs and responsibilities.
- Those of you who find learning difficult get extra help with your work.
- The school teaches you how to stay safe and keep healthy.

These are the things that need to be improved.

- You are capable of doing better in your work, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- We have asked your teachers to find ways of improving the teaching to help you learn more successfully.
- We have also asked that better use is made of all the information the school has about how well you are doing in your work. This is to help you make better progress and do as well as you are able.
- All the adults who lead and manage the school need to contribute to improving it and helping you do as well as you can.

Thank you for helping us with our work. We hope that you carry on enjoying school and do your best to help the headteacher and your teachers make Beech Hill a better school.