

Balby Central Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106732
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	309216
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Philip Cole

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	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Scotting
Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Molyneux
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2005
School address	Littlemoor Lane Balby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN4 0LL
Telephone number	01302 321914
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average size school serves a district close to the centre of Doncaster. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are similar to the averages for schools nationally. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The school has successfully renewed Investors in People and Healthy Schools status and has recently achieved Clean Air and International School Awards. The school is part of a Creative Partnership with local institutions. It also participates, at its own request, in the local authority's Intensifying Support Programme. This is designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards and accelerate the progress pupils make.

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 that is improving and has some good features. It enjoys a strong reputation locally and is very well supported by parents. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This reflects the very good pastoral care provided by adults and the opportunities pupils have to engage in interesting activities, such as the school's radio station. Their behaviour is good and they get on well together. 'People are really friendly here! That makes us feel happy', sums up the views of many pupils. They are keen to learn, but sometimes interest wanes in the less effective lessons. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to keep fit and healthy and enthusiastically take on responsibilities. For example, they act as play leaders and road safety officers and are proud of the healthy tuck shop they have set up.

Until recently, pupils made good progress to reach average standards when they left the school, from starting points that were below average. In 2006, standards dipped significantly. In the following year they recovered in mathematics and science, although too few pupils reached the higher levels in science. Standards remained significantly below average in English. Current evidence from observations of lessons and assessments of pupils' progress show that they are now mostly making impressive progress in making up the deficits in their learning in English, particularly in writing, which was the main weakness. Pupils are currently on track to attain average standards in Year 6. This reflects the impact of the successful programmes that have been put in place to tackle this issue. Standards also dipped significantly in Year 2, in 2007, with too few pupils reaching national expectations. Currently, a satisfactory proportion of pupils are working at nationally expected levels but too few are working at the higher levels.

Weaknesses in teaching contributed to the recent decline in standards and achievement and its legacy can still be seen in Year 2. These weaknesses are being successfully tackled through the action taken by the school's leaders including involvement in the Intensifying Support Programme. Teaching is now satisfactory overall, with a good proportion of lessons better than this. Nevertheless, the initiatives put in place are not yet fully effective and there are inconsistencies in the way in which they are being implemented. These prevent pupils' progress from being better than satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, pupils make good progress because what they are expected to learn is made clear to them and they work purposefully towards achieving these objectives. In these lessons work is mostly well matched to the needs of each group. This is not always the case for the more able pupils and as a result, their progress is subsequently less good than that of other pupils.

The wide range of visits and visitors, including artists and designers provided through the Creative Partnership and the well attended after-school clubs, add to pupils' enjoyment of school. Good provision for pupils' personal development, including involvement in activities associated with being a Healthy School and an International School successfully promote the strengths in this aspect of their development. The curriculum is currently under review and being modified to match pupils' needs more effectively. This is working well in relation to support provided for lower attaining pupils but not enough is done yet to provide challenge for more able pupils and those who may be gifted or talented. There are effective partnerships with parents and outside agencies. These ensure that any problems pupils have are quickly and effectively dealt with and pupils new to the school, including those who speak English as an additional language, are supported well and settle quickly to learning. Pupils' progress is now carefully tracked and the information gained is used increasingly well to provide effective

support for pupils who need extra help. Nevertheless, pupils are not yet given enough help to understand how they can improve their work or how to take the next steps in their learning.

Leaders in the school have faced many challenges as a result of previous instability in leadership and management and more recently a lack of continuity in staffing, mostly due to illness. Issues resulting from these, such as inadequacies in teaching and resources and their impact on standards, are being successfully addressed. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is well supported by an able senior leadership team and a very strong governing body. School self-evaluation is robust and accurate and together with the views of stakeholders informs the well thought out plans for improvement. Although uneven, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. The school provides satisfactory value for money. The strengths of the headteacher, leadership team and the governors, together with the recent improvements in teaching and learning provide the school with a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Induction arrangements are good and children settle well into the calm, reassuring environment of the Nursery. They make good progress across the Foundation Stage from starting points below and sometimes well below those expected, to reach broadly average standards by the end of Reception. This is because there is a good balance between well-taught, adult led sessions and purposeful activities that children can choose. Children are well cared for and assessments of their learning are used well to match activities to what they need to learn next. It is no surprise that parents make comments such as, 'My child has grown from being shy and unsure into a confident and happy four year old'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English.
- Ensure that higher attaining pupils are consistently challenged to reach their full potential.
- Enable pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work and what next steps to take in their learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness has been 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

Some ineffective teaching and staff absence contributed significantly to a marked drop in standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 in 2007. Issues to do with weaker teaching have been effectively tackled and staffing is now more stable. As a result, far more pupils are on track to achieve national expectations. Although current progress is much improved, too few Year 2 pupils are predicted to reach the higher levels in reading and writing. After disappointing results in 2006, and to a lesser extent in 2007, when English standards remained low, pupils in Year 6 are now making faster progress and are on track to achieve in line with national expectations in English and mathematics. This is because of the general improvements made in teaching, particularly in the teaching of writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are thoughtful and reflective and behaviour is good. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well with each other, cooperate effectively on tasks in lessons and they have a good understanding of cultural diversity. Although pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to keep healthy, they do not always choose healthy options at lunchtimes. They do enjoy the many opportunities they have for exercise. Pupils feel safe, have a good awareness of safety issues and know that they are listened to and well cared for. They contribute well to the school community through, for example, fund raising for charities, helping in the dining room and being 'Buddies' to other pupils at playtimes. Attendance is average and pupils are responding well to the school's attempts to improve it, for example, each class is keen to win the 'Attendance Ted' or the 'Attendance Cup'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Weaknesses, identified by the leadership team, in the way lessons have been taught are being effectively tackled through the Intensifying Support Programme. This is leading to more purposeful teaching. This includes the use of a wider range of teaching styles better suited to the way pupils learn, better matching of work to the different groups in each class and more effective use of skilful support assistants. Although these initiatives are not yet firmly established, the overall quality of teaching has improved and in the classes where they are well developed pupils make good progress. Teachers' feedback to pupils on their completed work does not yet help pupils to understand what they need to do to make it better. Across the school, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and the thoughtful and caring relationships they have with pupils create a positive atmosphere in classrooms.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The programmes for personal, social, health and emotional development promote pupils personal development well. The emphasis on creative aspects of the curriculum, provision of Spanish and enrichment through clubs all contribute to pupils' enjoyment. The basic curriculum is satisfactory. It is currently under review and being modified to match it more effectively to pupils' needs. This is working well in improving the provision for developing pupils' writing and meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils through an appropriate range of intervention strategies. The provision to stretch and challenge more able pupils is less well developed. Not enough has been done yet to make pupils' learning more coherent, relevant and purposeful by identifying effective and appropriate links between subjects. These would, for example, enable pupils to practise and extend their writing skills in subjects such as history and geography.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and any problems are quickly resolved with staff working effectively with parents and external agencies when necessary. The learning mentor programme keeps a

close eye on vulnerable pupils and has made a positive impact on attendance. The school has in recent years received a small number of pupils from other countries, some of whom have little spoken English. These pupils quickly settle. As with pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, their needs are successfully identified and are given appropriate support which enables them to make satisfactory and sometimes better progress. Pupils' progress is monitored closely and effective action is taken to support those who need it. Although pupils are given targets, these do not effectively help pupils understand what they need to do to take the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has high expectations and is determined to improve the performance of the school. She works hard to involve staff and to support those who need it. The headteacher is successfully enabling teachers to take increasing responsibility for subjects and aspects of the school's life. She does not step back from making difficult decisions and taking firm action when this is necessary to tackle issues that are restricting pupils' learning. The leadership team are professional and effective. Governors are very enthusiastic, very well trained and knowledgeable. They have demonstrated their ability to challenge both school leaders and the local authority when it has been necessary. School leaders and governors have successfully addressed difficult issues resulting from earlier instability in the leadership of the school and have taken decisive action to halt the decline in standards and achievement.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 disabilities make progress	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	3

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?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making the other inspectors and myself so welcome when we visited your school. We particularly enjoyed the time we spent talking to you and seeing what you were doing in your lessons. We know from what you said that you enjoy school because the adults are really friendly and your learning is fun. We think that everyone looks after you very well and you certainly have many interesting things to do, such as the running the school radio and joining in the many clubs you have.

Your school is satisfactory. It is getting better because your headteacher, the governors and teachers and their helpers are working hard to bring about improvements. We were very impressed with how well you behave and get on with each other. You have a good understanding of what you need to do to keep healthy and fit. You certainly enjoy exercise, but we noticed that you do not always make the healthiest choices at lunchtime. We think your healthy tuck shop was a very good idea though. We were also impressed with how you help each other, for example, by being 'Buddies' or 'Road Safety Officers'.

Most of you are making satisfactory progress and some of you make good progress. However, we believe that those of you who find learning easier could do even better. Therefore, we have asked your teachers to give you work that makes you think more. We know that you have worked hard to make your writing better and it has improved. However, we think that the school needs to make sure you all achieve well when you are tested in English in Year 6, because results have been disappointing. We have asked your teachers to make this happen. We have also asked them to give you more help to understand what you need to do to make your work better and what you can do to take the next steps in your learning. You can of course help then by doing what they suggest!