

Beech Hill Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107488
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309409
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Julie Price Grimshaw

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	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Mohammed Najib
Headteacher	Mr John Davie
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Mount Pleasant Avenue Halifax West Yorkshire HX1 5TN
Telephone number	01422 345004
Fax number	01422 381830

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Inspection number	309409

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school serving an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. Almost all of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the great majority have a first language other than English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is almost twice the national average. The school has the Healthy Schools award and Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Beech Hill is a satisfactory school with good features. These include the good quality care provided for pupils and the very wide range of valuable enrichment activities that enhance the curriculum and contribute to pupils' good personal development. 'We like coming to school because the staff care for us, and we care for each other', typifies pupils' views. Several aspects of the school's work have improved over the past few years; for example, a focus on behaviour management has helped to improve pupils' behaviour, which is now good. The school has also worked very successfully to improve attendance rates, which are now above the national average. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school's work and greatly appreciate the good standards of care provided for their children. They comment positively on the recent changes, saying that 'the school is getting better all the time.' These developments have started to impact positively upon pupils' achievement, which is now satisfactory. Pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 are below the national average; based on their below average starting points, this represents satisfactory progress. Results in the 2007 national tests for Year 6 pupils show an improvement on previous years. In particular, the good quality support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that the progress made by these pupils is good. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although the school recognises the good and outstanding practice that exists and has clear plans to build upon this. Positive relationships in almost all lessons help to establish a good learning environment. Pupils say that they learn best through direct involvement in activities; in lessons where they are encouraged to learn independently, progress is rapid. However, this good practice is not sufficiently widespread, and in some lessons the pace of learning is slowed as a result of too much teacher direction. Occasionally, pupils have limited direct involvement in activities and are expected to sit and listen for long periods of time. Nevertheless, recent improvements to the school's assessment policy for pupils in Years 1 to 6, including the use of data to check on pupils' progress, have helped to ensure that staff mark pupils' work well and regularly set targets. Pupils know their targets, and most are keen to work hard in order to achieve them.

The curriculum has recently been revised in order to strengthen links between subjects and provide more opportunities for pupils to practice their speaking and writing skills. Although it is too early to judge the full impact of this approach, there is some evidence that it is beginning to improve pupils' language skills. A major strength of the curriculum is the very good range of enrichment activities provided. There are numerous extra-curricular clubs, which take place at lunchtimes and are very well attended. Pupils love going out on educational visits and also have the opportunity to take part in residential trips. All of this, combined with good quality pastoral care, makes a significant contribution to their good personal development. Pupils behave well and are friendly and confident. They are extremely polite and courteous, and keen to take advantage of all the school has to offer.

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher and other senior leaders have a shared vision for the future of the school, which is clearly taking shape. Over the past few years they have implemented a number of changes that are now beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of the school's work. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified during the last inspection, and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start in Nursery with knowledge and skills below those typically expected for their age, with particular weaknesses in social, language and communication skills. They make satisfactory progress throughout the Foundation Stage but few reach the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection, particularly in planning, in the development of the outdoor area, which is well used throughout the day and in the classroom environment. However, a long period of staffing instability has meant that the school has only recently introduced systems to enable Nursery and Reception staff to accurately assess children's progress and attainment; these systems are not yet fully effective. Good induction procedures ensure that the children settle quickly into school routines. Leadership and management in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good, particularly with reference to the pace of lessons and pupils' active involvement in learning.
- Ensure the assessment systems introduced in the Foundation Stage enable staff to gain a fully accurate picture of children's progress and attainment.

A small proportion of the schools whose 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' standards on entry to Year 1 are below average. They make satisfactory progress across both key stages to reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are below average by the end of Year 6. Data from the 2007 national tests for Year 6 pupils show an improvement in standards and pupils' achievement compared to recent years. In particular, pupils' achievement in English has improved significantly compared to test results in 2006. Progress in mathematics and science has also improved, with achievement in science indicating that this is consistently one of the school's strongest subjects at Key Stage 2. This improvement is partly due to the school's work in refining the use of data in Years 1 to 6, enabling staff to set challenging targets for their pupils. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that the trend of improvement in pupils' progress is continuing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the good quality support and guidance provided for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school, they enjoy coming and have very good attitudes to their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and pupils speak sensibly about the importance of getting on with each other. The school council members show a strong commitment to playing an active part in improving the school. They really enjoy their discussions and feel that they are listened to by staff. Older pupils are encouraged to apply to be trained as play leaders. They take this responsibility seriously and enjoy helping others throughout the school day. Pupils have a good understanding of staying safe, fit and healthy.

The playtime tuck shop is popular and pupils make informed choices about healthy food from the good range available at lunchtime. Participation in a variety of popular sporting activities contributes well to this. The very good links with other schools, and the many visits and visitors that the pupils enjoy effectively develops their knowledge of the wider community. Parents are very appreciative of these opportunities, which help to develop many personal qualities in their children. Pupils leave the school with good personal skills and sound academic skills that prepare them satisfactorily for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A set of expectations that typify good teaching at the school has been agreed by staff and this is beginning to have an impact on the quality of classroom practice in most lessons. Teachers routinely share their aims for the lesson with pupils, and almost all teachers have secure subject knowledge. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. In the best lessons, they are actively involved in their learning and respond to their teachers with great enthusiasm. For example, during a practical science lesson, pupils worked exceptionally well, cooperating very effectively with each other and proudly sharing their findings with the rest of the class. However, a significant minority of lessons lack pace, and too much teacher direction means that pupils are not always encouraged to learn independently. In such lessons, progress is slowed. Teaching assistants throughout the school provide effective support, particularly for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The good quality care and guidance provided for these pupils results in them making good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad curriculum meets pupils' needs effectively. The school rightly identified the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise language skills, and there is some early evidence that modifications to the curriculum are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' writing. The curriculum is significantly enhanced by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities that develop pupils' skills in, for example, art, information and communication technology (ICT), and many sports. Pupils participate very enthusiastically in these activities; a typical view is, 'lunchtimes are brilliant - there's so much to do!' Cultural development is well supported through the curriculum. Established links with a school in the south of England and a school in Spain enable cultural differences to be shared and celebrated.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for in a happy, welcoming learning environment. All systems for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being are securely in place and meet current requirements. Relationships between staff and pupils are good; pupils say they feel safe and know there is always someone to talk over any worries they might have. Instances of bullying are rare, and pupils say they are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable pupils are fully included in all activities and make good progress. This is because of the good support given by specialist teachers, skilled teaching assistants and support staff. The learning mentor gives invaluable help to parents to support

their children's learning at home, and with more general queries they might have. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' progress is carefully monitored, although in the Foundation Stage, this is not yet fully effective. Clear targets are set to move learning forward, and teachers' written feedback is generally helpful in guiding pupils on how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Over the past few years the senior leadership team has refined a number of systems and procedures, and this work is now beginning to impact positively on pupils' achievement. More accurate assessment systems in Years 1 to 6, combined with improvements to the school's use of data, have assisted staff in setting ambitious yet achievable targets for all pupils. This has helped to motivate pupils to reach their potential. Procedures for monitoring and evaluation have enabled the headteacher and other school managers to gain an accurate overview of the quality of the school's work. Clear improvement planning reflects a corporate approach to school development. Teachers are given regular feedback on their classroom practice, securely linked to opportunities for professional development. This is in its early stages of impacting positively on establishing consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Governance is satisfactory. Following a period of instability, the governing body, supported by the local authority, has now recruited new members and re-examined members' roles and responsibilities. All are keen to support staff in improving the school further. Governors are extremely committed to their work in helping to provide the best possible education for the pupils.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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	3
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	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 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	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 the 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

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	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

Thank you very much for making the other inspectors and me so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you, hearing your views and watching you learn.

Beech Hill is a satisfactory school with good features. We can see that some things have improved over the past few years, including your attendance - so well done! Some of the older pupils and the staff told us that behaviour has improved too, and we could see that you behave well, both in the classrooms and around the school. You are so friendly and this is one of the best things about your school. It was fantastic for us to walk through the playground and have so many smiling children coming up to us to say hello. You are polite and helpful, and we were impressed with the way you care for each other. The play leaders are doing a great job with the younger children at lunchtime. You told us that the staff are very caring too, and we agree with you. We think that you are lucky to have so many interesting things to do during lunchtimes - some of you told us that golf club was fantastic. I enjoyed listening to some of you play the violin, and your work from the art club is lovely. We know that you love going out on trips, too.

You make satisfactory progress in your work throughout the school. The test results in 2007 showed that this is improving, and when we looked at your work we could see that you are now starting to make better progress. You are getting better at English, especially writing. We agree with those of you that said you make the best progress in lessons where you are given lots of activities to keep you busy. We have suggested that the school tries to make sure that more of your lessons are like this, which should help you to do even better with your work. Another thing we have suggested is that the teachers look carefully at the new ways of checking the progress children in the Foundation Stage make, to ensure that there is a really accurate view of how these children are getting on.

This is an exciting time for Beech Hill, and you have an important part to play in improving your school further. You can do this by keeping up your good behaviour and attendance, and by trying extra hard with your work, especially in English and mathematics. We are very pleased that you are proud to attend Beech Hill and wish you well for the future.