

Birstall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107635
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	309453
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	131
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 David Kean
Headteacher	Mr Michael Dickinson
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chapel Lane Birstall Batley West Yorkshire WF17 9EE
Telephone number	01924 326365
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils attending this smaller than average sized school are from White British backgrounds. In recent years, the number of pupils on roll has been falling. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school partway through their primary education is higher than found typically, as is the proportion entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. A private provider manages the care of children before and after school on the same site, which is inspected separately. Between Years 1 and 6, pupils are taught in mixed-aged classes. The school has been accredited with the Activemark award. The headteacher has been absent since January 2009. Since then, the school has been receiving additional leadership support from the local authority. In recent weeks, a full-time acting headteacher has been appointed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Birstall Primary is a satisfactory school. It has an accurate view of its effectiveness and provides satisfactory value for money. It is also an improving school. Pupils learn in a caring, nurturing and welcoming environment. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and adults provide effective support to enable pupils to develop good attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils feel happy and safe and behave well. Parents are mostly happy with the quality of education on offer. They particularly appreciate the approachability of staff and say that their children are well cared for and enjoy school.

Achievement is satisfactory. Although standards by the end of Year 6 are below average, pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their below average starting points. The quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum is satisfactory. High levels of long term staff absence and turnover have delayed efforts to establish effective systems for collecting and recording accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers' skills in assessing pupils' skills and knowledge accurately and using it to provide work that tightly matches pupils' differing ages and abilities are still developing. Nevertheless, recent initiatives such as improving pupils' behaviour, providing staff training and adapting the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage to speed up the acquisition of language skills, are all paying dividends. Standards across the school are rising and progress is accelerating. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because of effective support. This exemplifies the school's satisfactory promotion of equality of opportunity and elimination of discrimination. There are examples of good teaching and learning leading to good progress for some pupils, particularly in Years 1 and 2, where standards are now average. Similarly, the proportion of children on track to reach their learning goals in communication skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage is also higher than previously. Pupils' growing personal skills, such as their improved behaviour, along with satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy skills, prepare them soundly for their future.

Pupils' satisfactory academic achievement and personal development stem from the satisfactory quality of leadership and management. Senior leaders are driving improvements forward effectively. Although governors offer their support willingly, they do not yet fulfil all their statutory duties because they are insufficiently clear about what they must do. Leaders, managers and governors are now quickly developing an awareness of how well the school is performing. However, their contribution is not fully effective because their skills in reviewing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of education are still developing. Parents acknowledge that, although changes are happening at a very rapid pace, they are 'for the better' and have also been welcomed by their children. Staff and governors are welcoming opportunities for their professional development and demonstrate an eagerness to move the school forward positively. There is an extensive improvement agenda, a very sensible and realistic view of the way forward, along with a shared determination to rise to the challenges ahead. This, along with the satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, particularly in recent months, demonstrates that there is a positive platform upon which to build the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

When children start in the Reception class, their skills are below those found typically for their age. As a result of satisfactory teaching, learning and curriculum, children make steady progress.

The warm and caring relationships between adults and children ensure that children are happy in school and are keen to learn. Children's personal, social and emotional development is good. Adults help children to understand how to get along together, behave well and develop confidence. Staff are developing ways of assessing how well children are progressing. They are starting to use this information well to provide activities that boost learning where it is needed most. This is why, for example, there have been recent changes to the provision for children's language development, which is helping to further their reading and writing skills. As children work alongside adults, learning is often purposeful and effective. Opportunities for taking learning forward, however, are sometimes restricted when children play independently. This is because of the restricted range of good quality learning resources on offer, especially outdoors. Although there is no clear accountability for leadership and management at present, the temporary class teacher has led and made improvements. The proportion of children on track to reach their learning goals by the start of Year 1 is close to that found nationally.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teachers collect accurate assessment information and use it consistently well to plan work that matches pupils' varying ages and abilities.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors develop effective skills in using assessment information to review, monitor and evaluate the school's performance.
- Ensure that governors fulfil all of their statutory duties.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as 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

Between Years 1 and 6, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are below average. The small number of pupils in each year group means that standards can fluctuate widely from year to year. Although the school reported well below average standards in 2008 in Year 6, this reflected overall satisfactory progress for these pupils from their lower starting points. Standards are higher in reading and mathematics than in writing and science. Recent standards are lower than the standards reported at the previous inspection. Long term staff absences, high staff turnover and the continual reorganisation of classes necessary due to falling pupil numbers, have all contributed to this picture, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Pupils across the school are now making satisfactory progress, and there are also signs that progress has started to accelerate and that standards are rising. There are, for example, higher proportions of pupils in most year groups who are on track to reach the nationally expected levels by the end of Year 6. Similarly, standards are now average by the end of Year 2, reflecting improving progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils learn in a calm and orderly environment. Their behaviour is good, as is their understanding of how to stay safe. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils say that they find other children kind and caring. Older pupils, for example, enjoy looking after younger ones at

lunchtime. Although some pupils enjoy taking such responsibilities, opportunities for them to influence school decision making are still developing. Pupils' good behaviour represents recent improvement, including to their enjoyment of school. 'Everyone is smiling a lot more now', was a typical comment. The consistent application of new 'golden rules', along with higher expectations of behaviour and attitudes and increased recognition of efforts, no matter how small, are supporting this improved picture. Pupils' good understanding of healthy lifestyles shows in their eagerness to participate in a good range of sporting activities. Pupils are enthusiastic about current fundraising activities aimed at helping those less fortunate than themselves around the world. Their awareness of the diversity of cultures in Britain and the wider world, however, is underdeveloped. Pupils' growing personal skills, along with satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy skills, prepare them soundly for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching and learning. Good organisation, positive relationships, adept use of computerised teaching boards, effective management of behaviour and sensitive deployment of teaching assistants all make a good contribution to pupils' progress. There are examples of good teaching and learning. Skilful and challenging questioning that keeps pupils on their toes, active involvement of pupils in understanding how well they are getting on, high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work, along with good quality marking, typify this better quality of teaching. Although regular assessments are made in reading, writing and in mathematics, they are underdeveloped in science. Teachers are still to develop the necessary skills to carry out assessments effectively and to use them consistently well to plan and provide work that matches pupils' differing ages and abilities. Consequently, learning continues to move forward at a satisfactory rather than good rate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum enables pupils to make steady progress. The strong recent emphasis on pupils' personal development is helping to ensure that pupils benefit from their academic education. Good specialised support programmes help to meet the needs of pupils with social and emotional difficulties, so that they can learn alongside their peers. Additional programmes and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enable them to make satisfactory progress. A satisfactory range of clubs, trips and visitors enrich pupils' learning. The timetable provides an appropriate balance between subjects, placing sufficient emphasis on literacy, numeracy and science. However, progress in these areas remains steady rather than good because pupils' knowledge and skills do not always build sufficiently well on their previous learning, particularly in writing and science. Since the previous inspection, the provision for information and communication technology has improved and, as a result, progress is accelerating.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum enables pupils to make steady progress. The strong recent emphasis on pupils' personal development is helping to ensure that pupils benefit from their academic education. Good specialised support programmes help to meet the needs of pupils with social and emotional difficulties, so that they can learn alongside their peers. Additional programmes and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enable them to make satisfactory progress. A satisfactory range of clubs, trips and visitors enrich pupils' learning. The timetable provides an appropriate balance between subjects, placing sufficient emphasis on literacy, numeracy and science. However, progress in these areas remains steady rather than good because pupils' knowledge and skills do not always build sufficiently well on their previous learning, particularly in writing and science. Since the previous inspection, the provision for information and communication technology has improved and, as a result, progress is accelerating.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting headteacher, along with the additional local authority support, have very quickly got to grips with the school. Together, they are securing the necessary improvements. Other leaders, managers and governors share this commitment to improvement and show this by taking up new opportunities for their professional development and by volunteering to take on additional responsibilities. They are developing a greater awareness of how well the school is performing, but know they have yet to develop the skills needed to monitor and evaluate it effectively. Leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion and activities to extend pupils' understanding of the ethnic diversity of Britain are well underway. Staff, governors, parents and pupils appreciate their supportive and open approach. Governance is inadequate. Although supportive, governors are insufficiently clear about all their duties and, until very recently, the school's performance. Significant turbulence in staffing and leadership and frequent changes to class organisation have presented additional challenges. These include a lack of continuity in management roles in subjects, such as in science and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has hampered efforts to bring about sustained good improvement.

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?	3
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?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	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	2
The extent to which 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	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	4
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**

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave me when I inspected your school. You were keen to talk to me and answered my questions thoughtfully, politely and sensibly. Your behaviour was good and you were well mannered. It was good to hear that you feel safe and happy in school. Adults care about you a good deal and are keen for you to do well. It was good to see how pleased you are when you receive a 'savings token' when you have done something well.

Your school is a satisfactory school, but it is also getting better quickly. As you told me: 'Everyone is smiling a lot more now'. The staff, governors and even your parents all told me that changes are 'for the better'. These changes, such as your improved behaviour, are starting to help you do better at school. Although the rate at which you learn is similar to that which is expected, the standards that you reach by Year 6 are lower than the average for 11-year-olds, particularly in your writing and in science. Staff and governors are working very hard to help you to reach higher standards. I have asked them to help you further by making sure that:

- you reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science
- your teacher always gives you work that is never too hard or too easy, but is just right for you and gives you the chance to show what you are capable of
- your school leaders become more effective in using the information they have about your learning to check how well the school is doing
- your school governors carry out all their duties.

You can help your school by always asking how well you are getting on and what you still have to do to reach your learning targets. Of course, you should continue to try your best in everything that you do. I hope that you all reach your savings token goals.

Wishing you all the very best for a successful future.