

Berwick Hills Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111626
Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	310646
Inspection dates	16–17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Tony Anderson

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	400
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Raymond Holland
Headteacher	Mr Jim King
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Westerdale Road Middlesbrough TS3 7QH
Telephone number	01642 245598
Fax number	01642 252094

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Berwick Hills is larger than the average primary school and is situated in an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. Children's level of skills on entry to the Foundation Stage is generally below that typical for their age. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with a small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak a first language other than English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. A higher than average proportion of pupils leave or join the school at times other than the start of the school year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Berwick Hills Primary is a satisfactory school. It has some good features, particularly in pupils' personal development and in the care given to the pupils. It provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are below the national average but improving, although standards in writing are too low. The upward trend can be linked to significant but relatively recent improvements in the monitoring, assessment and tracking of pupils' progress. This has led to the increased effectiveness of strategies to accelerate pupils' learning, particularly in Key Stage 2.

An effective and caring family ethos has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and contributes very well to their personal development and well-being. Pupils demonstrate growing confidence and self-esteem, as shown by the positive work of the school council and in the way that pupils conduct themselves in classrooms and around the school. However, as identified at the previous inspection attendance is still below the national average and some pupils are not always punctual. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but variable in quality across the whole school. In the best lessons, pace and challenge are much in evidence and pupils show significant enjoyment in their learning. However, in some lessons, pupils are passive and the pace of learning is slow. Valuable opportunities for pupils to discuss their work with each other are sometimes lost. The satisfactory curriculum meets pupils' needs and is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have limited opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum. The school is highly successful in meeting the pastoral needs of vulnerable pupils who are very well supported by all staff. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because there is an accurate match of provision to their individual needs. The academic guidance given to pupils to ensure they know what they need to do to improve is developing well.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a generally accurate view of its strengths and areas for development through increasingly more effective self-evaluation. The headteacher's determined and dedicated leadership is supported effectively by other members of the management team. Significant improvements in systems to check how well pupils are doing and the actions taken to improve their learning are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement, though the monitoring of teaching and learning is not always fully effective.

Governors take a particularly keen interest in pupils' personal development and also provide active support to the senior leadership team. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; there is improvement in some areas, but pupils' writing and levels of attendance and punctuality should be better. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. On entry to the Nursery most children have skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, and in communication, language and literacy. They make satisfactory progress overall, though they make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.

Staff have developed a very caring environment for children so that they quickly begin to feel happy and secure. Parents say they notice their children developing greater independence soon after starting in the nursery. Good use is often made of the stimulating outdoor areas to help children develop new skills. For example, children in the Reception class extended their language skills as they played the part of passengers on a bus. Satisfactory teaching overall, together with some well established daily routines, enable children to make a positive start to their learning. Children enjoy the range of activities and work enthusiastically at their tasks with high levels of enjoyment. Close attention is given to developing children's social skills, and routines are well organised so that children quickly acquire a range of learning habits. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the majority of children have acquired knowledge and skills at levels which are below that expected nationally, although given their starting points this represents satisfactory progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and standards, particularly in writing.
- Through more effective monitoring, increase the proportion of good teaching so that pupils make a faster rate of progress.
- Improve attendance and punctuality.

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' achievement is satisfactory. Children's skills on entry to the Foundation Stage are lower than those typically found. They make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, although in the 2006 assessments standards remained below the national averages, especially in writing. The unvalidated results in 2007 showed an improvement, significantly so in mathematics.

Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2. The 2006 national test results were below average in English, mathematics and science. The results are sometimes adversely affected by a few higher attaining pupils moving to other schools before the end of Key Stage 2. The unvalidated results in 2007 show an improvement, but writing still remains a relative weakness. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

This aspect is a strength of the school. Pupils are confident in talking to adults. They speak warmly about the school and feel that it is a place where they feel safe. Pupils carry out a range of duties, such as school council representatives, which enable them to contribute to the life of the school and to show their concern for others. For example, peer mediators ensure that younger children are looked after in the playground and help pupils to resolve minor disputes amicably. Pupils understand it is important to keep healthy through a sensible diet and exercise.

Pupils' enjoyment of many lessons and their pride in their school is demonstrated by their good behaviour although some are occasionally a little passive. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good, and pupils confirm that racial harmony is successfully achieved in school.

They respect and understand the feelings of others, are polite and courteous, and relationships in the school are very good. Although standards are below average pupils' developing academic skills, together with their good personal skills, mean that they are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education. Attendance is below the national average and has not improved since the school's last inspection, despite the introduction of strategies to support the children and families who do not attend regularly or arrive punctually.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Common strengths of the teaching are effective class management and good relationships. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is often good as is the oral feedback which helps pupils to know how to improve. Teachers make effective use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and to provide clear targets for improvement. Occasionally, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to assess their own work. Where the teaching is most effective, there are well planned sequences of learning activities and teachers give clear explanations and instructions. Lessons move along at a brisk pace and there is a good level of challenge for all pupils. The use of questioning is generally satisfactory, but teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' speaking skills by demanding extended answers. Occasionally, the more able pupils are not fully challenged and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their own initiative.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has a satisfactory curriculum with some strengths. The school promotes pupils' personal development very well so that they gradually mature into sensible and responsible individuals. A good range of additional activities and after-school clubs enrich the curriculum and add enjoyment to learning. Good links with the local community ensure that pupils have a range of opportunities to contribute and take on additional responsibilities. Curriculum plans cover all aspects and subjects and these are modified to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers make effective use of national guidance when teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, the school does not extend pupils' writing skills by providing opportunities to write in other subject areas and this has an adverse impact on the standards they attain.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Effective strategies are in place for the promotion of pupils' personal and social development. There is a strong commitment from staff to the care and safety of pupils. This is underpinned by very good relationships between pupils and adults and pupils are confident that their concerns will be addressed. The overwhelmingly majority of parents agree that their children are very well cared for and are safe in the school. Effective links with parents and external agencies ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well met. Child protection procedures are rigorous and the school has appropriate risk assessments in place to meet statutory safeguarding requirements. The school has effective

systems for academic guidance, but as many of these initiatives are relatively new, it is too early to judge the long term impact on pupils' standards and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides determined and dedicated leadership. He is exceptionally well supported by his deputy and together they have implemented a number of recent managerial initiatives with the sustained improvement in pupils' achievement and standards as their key objective. A team of middle managers is developing its skills, and adding further support to the leadership team. All now share the same vision for the school. Although this strengthening of the management team is relatively new there are signs of improvement in achievement. The school's self-evaluation reflects a generally accurate awareness of strengths and weaknesses. However, procedures for monitoring teaching and learning sometimes lack rigour and are not always as effective as they might be. The school works well in collaboration with parents who are regularly consulted on a wide range of issues and who are mostly very happy with the work of the school.

Governors fulfil their statutory obligations and demonstrate a positive level of commitment to the school's work. In their capacity as critical partners they provide a satisfactory level of support to the senior leadership team and are very dedicated in ensuring the care and welfare of all pupils in the school.

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
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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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	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 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	4
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?	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	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 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

18 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Berwick Hills Primary School, Middlesbrough, TS3 7QH

Thank you very much for being so friendly and kind to us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and watching you at work in the classroom, at outdoor play and in the dining hall. You told us how much you enjoy your life at school and that you feel very safe and secure. You also said that your teachers are very friendly and that you can always get help if you are not feeling very well or if you have a problem.

We think you that you are making satisfactory progress in your lessons during your time in the school and that you make even better progress in your personal development, as shown by your good attitudes and behaviour. To help you reach higher standards your school is going to:

- help you to make faster progress, especially in writing
- for all your lessons to be as good as the best, so that all of you are given work that is at just the right level
- for the school to help and encourage you all to attend school regularly and to arrive on time.

You have an important part to play here. You can help by always trying to produce your best work, especially in writing, and make sure that you come to school regularly and on time.

Best wishes

Mr Tony Anderson

Lead inspector