

High Bentham Community Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121380 |
| Local Authority | North Yorkshire |
| Inspection number | 313969 |
| Inspection dates | 24–25 September 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Janette Corlett |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–10 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 136 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Robert Taylor |
| Headteacher | Mrs Catherine Boocock |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10 November 2003 |
| School address | Main Street High Bentham Lancaster Lancashire LA2 7JU |
| Telephone number | 01524 261412 |
| Fax number | 01524 261412 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

High Bentham is smaller than the average sized school nationally. It holds the International School Award (2007-2010) and has achieved the Healthy School Award. There is a broad social mix in the school and the full range of ability is represented. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. Few pupils are eligible for free school meals and the proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good. Parents appreciate how much the school cares for their children and say that staff are always friendly and approachable. Inspectors agree. Despite the limitations of the school buildings, the school provides a bright and vibrant learning community. It makes good use of the school grounds and the rich natural resources available in the locality to enhance the curriculum. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for one another and understand the importance of making a positive contribution to the wider community. The strong international links prepare pupils well to take their place in a multicultural society and enhance their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils love coming to school. That is why their attendance is good. Pupils say, 'All adults are really caring - they are just like mums and dads to us.' Similarly parents note that, 'The school is like one big family.' This means that pupils' behaviour is very good: they are kind to one another and very polite and courteous towards adults in the school.

Standards and achievement are good. Children start Nursery with skills typical for their age and, by the time they move on to middle school, they reach standards which are generally slightly above those expected. Most children leave the school with good basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and have a sound basis for their future economic well-being.

Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give clear explanations. They have good questioning skills, which encourage thinking and promote opportunities for speaking and listening. Support assistants are given clear directions for group activities, which help pupils learn whilst allowing teachers to extend the degree of challenge for more able pupils or give focused support for specific areas of weakness. Specialist teachers and visitors regularly come into school. Their expertise and enthusiasm encourages children to take part in sports, music and creative arts and this adds to their enjoyment and personal development.

The school sets challenging annual targets for the amount of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics, but pupils do not always understand these targets and how they will know when they have achieved them. This means that in Years 3, 4 and 5, progress in writing, particularly that of boys, and mathematics is not always as rapid as it could be. The school is aware of this and teachers are working hard to ensure that pupils can achieve to their full potential.

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher knows the school in-depth and has helped it to improve well since its last inspection. Other senior leaders, and some governors, are relatively new to their roles. They understand what the school needs to do to improve further, but have not had time to make many improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school's provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They settle quickly into the school's routines and make good progress because teachers and support staff actively encourage them to become as independent as possible in their learning. Children enjoy a wide range of activities that promote creativity and provide very good opportunities for personal and social development.

They are excited about coming to school and feel safe and valued. They learn to express their ideas well by, for example, listening to stories and predicting what might happen next or suggesting alternative endings. Similarly, their mathematical development is good owing to the stimulating range of activities available, which help them develop mathematical ideas and methods to solve simple problems. Facilities for playing outside are good, but they are too far from the classrooms to allow very regular access. This prevents the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage from being outstanding, as the school suggests. Children reach the levels expected of them by the end of Reception, but make particularly good progress in personal and social development. This gives them great confidence when transferring to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in writing, particularly that of boys, and in mathematics for all pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that pupils are given clear and specific personal targets for improvement in English and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good by the end of Year 2 and Year 5, following good progress in the Foundation Stage. At the end of Year 2 pupils reach standards which are above the national average in reading and mathematics and broadly in line with it in writing. These standards dipped slightly at the end of Year 2 in 2007 due to a higher than usual proportion of pupils in the cohort with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In Years 3, 4 and 5 progress is generally good and many pupils achieve beyond expectations. By the time pupils move on to the next stage in their education, standards are generally above those expected in reading, writing and mathematics. The variations in pupils' achievements, from year to year, in writing and mathematics, for example, do not detract from the good achievement generally. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good support and make good progress from their individual starting points.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel very safe and are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. They say that bullying is very rare indeed. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy quiet, spiritual reflection during assemblies, act responsibly and contribute to both local and global communities. For example, they regularly entertain local people with their concerts and performances and contribute to national and international charities. The school council is valued by pupils. They appreciate the opportunity to have a voice in school. Recently they asked if the toilets could be improved and this resulted in a complete refurbishment. Councillors learn how to conduct meetings fairly and to type more quickly! Pupils also act well as classroom monitors and 'playground friends'. The school's preparation of pupils for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. Computers are used well, but the weaknesses in boys' writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2, limit the growth of key skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and their enthusiastic and friendly approach creates a happy and purposeful learning environment. Typically, in good lessons, teachers and pupils work closely together on challenging tasks which have been well planned to meet the learning needs of individuals. Pupils make good progress in these lessons and enjoy being actively involved. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but the quality of teacher's written feedback is inconsistent across Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, where comments rightly give praise for achievement, but do not always identify weaknesses and suggest ways in which pupils could improve. This means that their progress in mathematics is not as rapid as that in reading and writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for most areas of the curriculum. Some aspects are not so successful, which leads to some shortcomings in writing and mathematics. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular clubs and activities. All pupils learn French and in Year 4 they learn German. There is a strong emphasis on providing high quality physical education, led by specialists and promoted through interschool competitions and events. Older pupils have the chance to visit a residential outdoor education centre which promotes their personal and social development and allows them to participate in adventurous activities such as climbing and canoeing. The school actively promotes inclusion and ensures full access to the curriculum for all learners including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 'Peer massage' and 'circle time' sessions help pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem. Music is a real strength of the school - all pupils can learn to play a musical instrument and are encouraged to take part in concerts and performances. The school has developed good cross-curricular links. This maximises the opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT and contributes to their good progress in these subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for all its pupils very well and gives them good guidance and support on how to be healthy and keep themselves safe. School procedures for safeguarding children are robust and regularly reviewed. Similarly, the school promotes equality of opportunity. Racist incidents are very rare indeed, but are treated seriously, recorded and reported to governors and the local authority.

In this safe and supportive environment, the great majority of pupils make good progress. The school's good links with parents and outside agencies mean that pupils are well-supported in all stages of their development, including the transition to the next phase of their education. Parents are kept well-informed on their children's progress. They know that any concerns will be treated sensitively and appropriate action taken where necessary. The lack of individual academic guidance for pupils on the next steps in each stage of their learning and how they

will know when they have been successful prevents this aspect of the school from being even better than it is.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and maintains the school's strong focus on raising standards and achievement for all pupils. As a result the rest of the school staff work together very well as a team, with a shared sense of values and an obvious enthusiasm for their work. They support the headteacher in making learning fun, promoting learners' personal development and recognising the individuality of every child. The school's senior leaders are experienced, but new to their distinct roles in the management of the school. This means that systems to rigorously track pupil progress and measure the impact of strategies for improvement are still in the early stages of development and that the school's self-evaluation processes are not quite as robust as they could be. The school's supportive governors are aware of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses, but they do not always have sufficiently detailed information to hold the school to account for its performance in terms of raising standards and achievement. These relative shortcomings, caused by a lack of time for systems to work fully, are not major issues. They do not detract from the good results produced already. This school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

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.

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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

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| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 |

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| 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 | 1 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 |
| 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 |
| 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 |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making me so very welcome on my recent visit to your school. I really enjoyed my time with you and was very impressed with how polite and well-mannered you all are. You are a real credit to your school.

I judged that your school is good. Your teachers really care for you and make learning safe and fun. They also give you lots of opportunities to do exciting and interesting activities, like the trips to Humphrey Head and Bradford. You work hard and behave well in lessons and at break times. I was very impressed with how much you know about being healthy and enjoyed joining you for two delicious (and healthy!) meals. Many of you take on responsible positions in school, looking after one another and making very sensible suggestions on things you would like to improve in your community. You think of other people and help them by raising money for charities and entertaining your families and members of the local community with your splendid musical performances.

You all do well in your tests, but, in Key Stage 2, your results in mathematics and writing, particularly boys' writing, are not quite as good as they are in reading. Some of you are not sure about how well you are doing in these subjects and the things you need to do to be even better.

I have asked your teachers to give you a bit more information on how much progress you are making and to make sure you understand the next steps in your learning journeys. You can help them by continuing to work hard and always asking for help if you need it. All your teachers are very friendly and willing to explain things to you.

Thank you again for talking to me and telling me how much you enjoy learning and playing together. The school council were especially helpful and are doing a great job for your school. Good luck for the future!