

# Birchwood Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125621
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315272
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barbara Crane

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	396
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Elenaor Pugh
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tess Vigus
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Birchwood Avenue Dordon Tamworth B78 1QU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01827 892913
<b>Fax number</b>	01827 892678

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is much larger than most primary schools. Children's attainment when they start school is below average. Pupils come from a wide area and mobility among pupils is higher than normally found, with pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than the usual entry times. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average.

## 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. It successfully promotes pupils' good personal development because of effective pastoral care and guidance. However, pupils only make satisfactory academic progress during their time at the school. Pupils really enjoy school, behave well and know how to keep healthy and safe. They are very keen to take on responsibility and make a good contribution to the community. The view of one parent reflects that held by many that 'this is a happy school, where children are made to feel important'.

Children in Reception quickly gain ground from their starting points. By the time they reach Year 1, most are reaching the expectations for their age in all areas of learning. Standards are average in Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' progress is satisfactory and they are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education and later life. There are some strengths in both the curriculum and the teaching and learning in the school, but they are not yet sufficiently widespread to ensure pupils' good progress. Relationships in the school are good and the staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to understand how to improve their work. Pupils are not always sure of their individual targets or how to reach them. This limits their understanding of what they need to do next to achieve more. Assessments are not always used to plan work at just the right level to enable pupils to do their best. The guidance given to adults who support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not always helpful to enable pupils' needs to be fully met.

The school has a secure view of its own strengths and weaknesses because of sound self-evaluation and satisfactory leadership and management. Effective steps have been taken to raise pupils' standards and achievement in mathematics, indicating the school's sound capacity to improve further. Systems to track pupils' progress are developing well and are used to set appropriately challenging targets for the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide an effective lead for the school and pursue improvement relentlessly. Their efforts to boost the quality of teaching are starting to show good results. Other leaders' skills are slowly developing through monitoring teaching and learning and analysing information about pupils' performance, but are presently too limited to enable them to support fully the pace of school improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enjoy their first experiences of school and want to do their best because of adults' warm encouragement. They get a good start because teaching recognises their individual needs and caters for these well. Consequently, children make good progress in the Reception classes, from a point below that expected for their age when they start school. Their good achievement means that most reach the expected level in all areas of learning by the time they start Year 1. Effective leadership and management ensure that children's progress is carefully assessed, and their curiosity fed by planning a wide range of interesting activities. The right areas for improvement are identified and are being worked on, for example, better opportunities for children to solve everyday mathematical problems.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching uses assessments consistently to plan work at a challenging level for pupils' different needs and abilities.

- Ensure that support staff know how best to guide learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties.
- Ensure that target-setting systems and teachers' marking support pupils' next steps in learning.
- Improve leaders and managers' skills in checking what is happening in classrooms and analysing data on pupils' performance.

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 do reasonably well during their time at the school but their progress is not consistent. Children in Reception make good progress, moving from their below average starting points to reach the expectations for their age by the end of the year. This provides a good platform for future success but is not built on consistently in later years. Pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory in reading, writing and mathematics but they do not achieve their best because the work is not always adapted well enough to their different abilities. Standards have been average in recent years but dipped in mathematics for pupils in Year 6 in 2007. The school acted swiftly to resolve the weaknesses in teaching and learning. Raised expectations and a close focus on improving pupils' skills in problem solving have improved pupils' progress, and standards in mathematics are now average. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets. There are times, however, when their progress slows because these targets are too vague and the teaching lacks sufficient precision to enable them to reach them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good social development is reflected in the positive relationships evident throughout the school. Children in Reception listen to each other as well as adults, and work and play well together. Pupils behave well, enjoy each other's company and make good friends. As one pupil said, 'It's easy to make friends here because everyone is nice to you.' Those who join the school at different times are quickly taken into the fold and settle in happily. Pupils eat healthily and have a good understanding of the importance of exercise in keeping fit. They know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils in Year 6 say they must make decisions for themselves and 'not give in to peer pressure' to make the wrong choices. Pupils are polite and care for each other well. They show a good level of maturity and are keen to take on responsibilities, such as peer mentors, monitors and school councillors. Through these roles, they contribute well to the school's development and its smooth running each day. Pupils are very positive about the house system, which enables them to develop good team skills. Pupils' social skills and positive attitudes to learning set them up well for the future but they are less well prepared in terms of progress in their work.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Good relationships ensure pupils are keen to learn, enjoy their lessons and work hard. Classrooms are well organised and there are consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour, which leads to a calm working environment. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mainly achieve their individual targets. However, the guidance for adults supporting these pupils lacks precision about exactly what needs to be worked on and this sometimes slows pupils' progress. Teachers have responded well to the whole-school initiative to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills. As a result, their questions consistently encourage pupils to extend their answers and so pupils' understanding and vocabulary expand. While there is some very effective practice, there are inconsistencies in teaching that reduce pupils' rate of progress. Some teachers' marking does not always provide pupils with information about how they can improve their work. In some classes, not enough is done to remind pupils of their targets, for example, in writing, to help them focus on areas to improve. Teachers do not always use effectively the information from assessments to plan activities to meet pupils' individual needs and this limits pupils' progress.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Good planning for social and health education means that pupils keep fit, eat healthily and form good relationships. The curriculum in Reception takes good account of children's different needs and speeds their learning. For other ages, it is not adapted as well to the full range of pupils' abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The wide range of extra activities does much to promote pupils' enjoyment of school. Pupils in Year 6, for example, speak enthusiastically about the Comenius project that enables them to learn about different cultures. Partnerships with other schools in sports activities are well established and pupils relish the opportunities to compete. They also benefit from many opportunities to join in drama and musical activities.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Good procedures exist to safeguard pupils. Pupils feel secure because of the good level of care provided. They are confident that in the rare event of any bullying occurring it will be dealt with quickly and effectively. The good guidance from staff helps pupils to overcome any personal difficulties and so the pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. The assessment of pupils' work and guidance to support their academic achievement is not as consistent as that for their pastoral needs. The pupils' progress is tracked adequately but the information gained is not used consistently to match the learning more closely to the needs of all learners to raise achievement further. Pupils are set targets to guide the next steps for learning, but are not always familiar with these and are not sure how they can be used to help them to achieve more.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Principled leadership by the headteacher has established a vision that is shared by everyone. In spite of some challenging circumstances with staffing in recent years, there is a strong sense of community. Everyone is united in their desire to get the best for pupils. The school's planning for improvement has the right priorities because of sound self-evaluation. The most senior leaders and managers keep a careful watch on what needs to be done to raise pupils' achievement further. Their good monitoring in classrooms and careful scrutiny of information about pupils' performance results in a clear understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Other managers' skills in monitoring in classrooms are developing but are presently too limited to enable them to support fully improvements in teaching and learning. They have the data about pupils' progress but their skills in analysing them to see what it is telling them about pupils' progress are underdeveloped. This restricts their ability to bring about change for the better for different groups of pupils. Governors are committed to the school and provide satisfactory support. They recognise the need to offer more challenge to the school by asking pertinent questions.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

28 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birchwood Primary School, Dordon, B78 1QU

Thank you all for being so welcoming when we visited your school recently. I am writing to tell you what we found out while we were with you. We found that you go to a satisfactory school and that you do reasonably well in your work because of sound teaching. Children in the Reception classes get a good start, but after that, progress is more mixed for those of you in Years 1 to 6.

You all help to make your school a happy place. We were very pleased to see how much you enjoy school and that you are growing up as mature and sensible young people who make good friends. Your behaviour is good. Keep it up! You know how to keep safe, eat healthily and help your school and the community to improve. Well done, everybody.

Everyone at the school works hard to keep you safe in school. You told us you all enjoy the school visits and taking part in extra activities. Like you, we think that your school does really well to provide so many exciting things for you to do.

The people in charge are working hard to get the best for you. They know what to do. We have asked your teachers to help you all to do your best by making sure that you know your targets and plan work to help you reach them. We have also asked them to make sure that you know how to improve your work when they mark it. These things will help you all to make better progress and do as well as you can.

Finally, we have asked the school to improve the way it checks on how well you are learning in the classroom and use the information from your teachers' assessments to show how well you are doing.

Thank you again for being so friendly and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Crane Lead inspector