

# Benchill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132241
<b>Local Authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	315985
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 September 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony Calderbank

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	315
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Kim King
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Brenda Portman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 May 2003
<b>School address</b>	Benchill Road Wythenshawe Manchester Lancashire M22 8EJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 9983075
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 9456008

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Benchill primary school is larger than average and serves a challenging area with very high levels of social disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage and skill levels on entry to the Nursery are very low. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. There are a small number of looked after children. The school has gained the Activemark Gold and Healthy schools award. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had just returned after an absence of two years. The school has a very good partnership with the local high school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to raising standards and pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science, the use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning and the involvement of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating their areas. The school's effectiveness and the value for money provided are inadequate.

The school has gone through a turbulent period. The headteacher was unavoidably absent for two years but has since returned. During her absence, a number of acting headteachers and associate headteachers ran the school. This lack of continuity had an adverse effect on staff morale. It also contributed to a decline in standards which are now significantly below average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils have made too little progress over time and until recently, underachievement has not been tackled effectively. As a result, the school has made too little progress since the last inspection. With good support from the Local Authority, strenuous efforts are now being made to reverse the decline in standards and improve provision. Since her return, the headteacher has set a clear direction for the school. Staff and governors are united in their determination to raise standards. Some of the actions taken are already having a positive effect. For example, the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage has improved significantly and is good. In Years 1 to 6, the quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory and this is helping pupils to make sound progress. However, teachers do not make good enough use of assessment information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning to ensure good progress and a suitable level of challenge in the work.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they could turn to a member of staff if they have any concerns. They are aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. Strenuous efforts have been made by the school to successfully improve behaviour and attendance. As a result, behaviour is satisfactory and attendance is currently just below average which is quite an achievement in a short period of time.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy taking part in a range of activities and visits. There are strong links with the local high school which greatly enhance learning. A satisfactory level of care, support and guidance is provided. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively and good links with outside agencies ensure that children are kept safe.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have a good grasp of what must be done to improve pupils' achievements but do not check on the actions taken rigorously enough. Governors are firmly focused on raising standards and holding the school to account. There is a good working relationship between staff and the governing body. Though the effectiveness of the school has declined since the previous inspection, recent improvements demonstrate a sound capacity to improve.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children enter the Foundation Stage unit with levels of skills which are very low, particularly in speaking and listening. They have poor personal and social skills especially in terms of relating to each other and to adults. Children settle quickly into the routines of the Nursery and clearly enjoy coming to school. Within a caring atmosphere, the children develop self-confidence and learning to become increasingly independent. Though they make good progress in all the areas of learning, standards are still well below national expectations by the time they enter Year 1. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff ensure that there is a wide range of well-focused activities to promote learning. The school's drive to improve pupils' speaking skills is clearly evident in the way adults use good quality questioning to encourage children to expand their explanations. Resources are adequate but the provision for role play and some outside activities are weak. The overall quality of the children's experiences in the unit provides a secure foundation for their future learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Use assessment information more rigorously to plan the next steps in pupils' learning to ensure that they are appropriately challenged and make good progress.
- Ensure that leaders and managers rigorously monitor the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' achievements.
- Improve attendance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Standards are well below average in English, mathematics and science, and pupils' achievement over time has been inadequate. Standards have fallen significantly since 2005. In 2006, the school's results were significantly below the national average in English, mathematics and science, and the progress made by pupils was poor. Results declined further in 2007 and the school did not meet its targets. Assessments of Year 2 pupils' performances in reading, writing and mathematics were also lower than 2006. Writing is a particular weakness with a significant number of pupils entering Year 3 not achieving the expected levels for seven year olds. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 also struggle with writing and do not achieve as well as they should because of weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and vocabulary. Though achievement in reading is better, not enough pupils reach the standard expected for their age. Recent action has successfully improved the quality of teaching and pupils are now making satisfactory progress in lessons. However, the challenge for more able children is still not sufficient to ensure that they fulfil their full potential. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children make satisfactory progress because of the extra support they receive.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Imaginative and effective strategies are in place to raise attendance. Attendance levels have risen substantially but still remain just below average. Pupils develop satisfactory attitudes to learning because they can see that the staff who teach them are interested in helping them to make progress. However, in some classes

pupils remain reluctant to answer teachers' questions. Pupils say they enjoy school and that they feel safe and have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Behaviour is satisfactory overall because of the decisive actions taken by the leadership team. Pupils know and understand what is expected of them, although a small number of pupils can be rather boisterous and sometimes behave in an inappropriate way. Incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and there are no recorded cases of racism. Pupils talk knowledgeably about healthy eating and enjoy taking part in sporting activities. Playground games successfully develop good attitudes to exercise. Initiatives such as helping in the community by making the local park more attractive are enjoyed by the pupils. Pupils' say their views are valued. The school council promotes a good sense of citizenship and pupils are proud to represent 'their' school. However, pupil involvement in setting targets to help them improve further is at a very early stage. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to find out about life outside school but the well-below average academic standards do not prepare pupils well for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils make sound progress in lessons. Visiting staff from the local high school and outside organisations enhance the quality of teaching in areas such as music and physical education. Positive relationships and good organisation are strong features of most of the teaching but a common weakness is that some of the work is over directed and pupils are not being encouraged to take enough responsibility for their own learning. A satisfactory emphasis is given to developing basic literacy and numeracy skills with additional time given to reading and writing. In literacy and mathematics lessons, teachers have begun to make use of assessment information to group pupils according to their ability. However, they do not use the information effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning to ensure good progress and appropriate challenge. When pupils take part in practical activities the quality of learning is better. Teaching assistants are thoughtfully used to guide and encourage pupils and ensure that those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities play a full part in the lesson. Teachers mark work but sometimes there is no comment on how well the success criteria have been met or what pupils need to do next to improve their work. As a result, pupils are not challenged sufficiently and their work is not always well presented.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects in order to make learning more meaningful and relevant to pupils' needs. Good provision is made for physical education and the school has received a national award for this aspect of its curriculum. Strong links with the local high school provide pupils with valuable opportunities to take part in a range of activities. The school is beginning to make satisfactory use of the social and emotional learning teaching materials to promote pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in many extra-curricular activities. These include a computer club and dance club. Educational visits are made to places of interest and a good range of visitors to school complement learning well.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe and are confident that they can seek help when they have problems. One pupil said, 'there is always someone you can go to for help if you are unhappy'. There is effective support from teaching assistants for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One pupil said, 'I like the teachers here, they help you understand your work'. Procedures for child protection and health and safety are in place and there is good evidence that vulnerable pupils are particularly well cared for. The induction of new pupils is organised sensitively - they and their parents are made most welcome. An extensive range of outside agencies such as social services and educational psychologists is well used to extend the support provided in school. There are satisfactory systems in place for checking the progress made by pupils but the information gained is not used well enough by teachers to plan lessons. Not all targets are sufficiently challenging and not always precise enough to be of maximum benefit. Pupils' personal development is enriched by extended activities at lunchtimes and after school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The return of the headteacher has had a positive impact on the atmosphere and ethos of the school. She has set a clear direction for the school which is shared by all staff. The leadership team is focused on raising standards and there are clear signs of improvement. One parent commented, 'I feel the school is vastly improving'. Systems have been put in place that have improved teaching. For example, a whole-school approach to the management of pupils' behaviour means that teachers can now spend more time on teaching and that pupils learn effectively. The management team has been strengthened in the last year. Subject leaders in English and mathematics have an adequate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas and taken action to bring about improvement. However, they do not yet rigorously monitor and evaluate the impact of any actions taken. In addition, there has not been enough emphasis on evaluating the progress individual pupils make in lessons and over time, so that effective action can be taken if progress has been found to be too slow. This has contributed to the low achievement in the school and the setting of inappropriate targets. However, the changes made to planning and assessment are beginning to bring about improvement and the progress pupils are now making is satisfactory overall. The targets set this year are challenging and achievable. A new governing body has been formed and governors are committed to the school and focused on bringing about improvement.

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## 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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

### 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?	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	4
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	4
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?	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Benchill Primary School, Wythenshawe, Manchester M22 8EJ

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when my colleagues and I visited your school recently. I want to let you know what we found out about your school.

We were very pleased to see that most of you behave well and that you enjoy school. It was good to hear one of you say, 'I like the teachers here; they help you understand your work'. The youngest children are very lucky to be given such a good start in the Foundation Stage. We were pleased that you appreciate the after-school clubs and activities.

However, we think that the school could do more to help you with your work. We know your school is currently going through a time of great change and we have decided that it would benefit from extra help. We have given it a 'notice to improve'. Inspectors will come back soon to see how well things are going. We want to make sure your teachers plan the next steps in your learning carefully so that you can learn to think really hard and do better work in English, mathematics and science. We have also asked that teachers check to ensure that any actions taken to improve your school are carried out successfully. We want you to work very closely with your teachers so that your school can become one of the best. Although your attendance has improved a lot, there are still too many of you missing chances to learn. Please do everything you can to attend regularly.