

Birchen Coppice Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135045
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	319602
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Currie

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	232
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	Nikki Gale
Headteacher	Liane Billingsley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Woodbury Road Kidderminster DY11 7JJ
Telephone number	01562 823582
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Birchen Coppice is a smaller than average size primary school and was established in September 2007. The school had an unsettled start when it first opened due to staff changes, recruitment and premises problems. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Almost half the pupils are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is significantly higher than found nationally. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS) comprises of a Nursery and Reception class. A private nursery also operates on the school site.

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, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement, standards and attendance, which are all inadequate.

Standards by the end of Year 6 are well below average and too few pupils reach the higher levels. Pupils have significant gaps in their learning due to previous inadequate teaching. Consequently, pupils' achievement is inadequate. After its difficult start the school is now more settled, and effective initiatives instigated by the headteacher are beginning to make a difference.

The school is rightly focusing on the teaching of English and mathematics. For example, the new writing project is successfully improving progress in this aspect of English. Although the quality of teaching and learning has substantially improved and is now satisfactory overall, teaching is not yet of a consistently high enough quality to compensate for the legacy of underachievement. Strategies to improve teaching and learning have resulted in some good teaching in each phase of the school. Teachers effectively encourage pupils to participate more in their learning, for example, by using 'talk partners' or small whiteboards that encourage all pupils to contribute answers to questions in whole-class teaching sessions. The curriculum is satisfactory and suitably adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. The content of lessons is not always exciting enough to enthuse all pupils and is correctly a current development priority for the school. Pupils have a good understanding of their personal targets for learning and teachers' effective marking helps them to work towards these. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. In the warm, caring, settled environment of the school, the behaviour of pupils has improved to be now satisfactory. Most pupils show positive attitudes, are friendly and relate well to adults in school. They feel safe and enjoy school. They participate in fund raising and the effective school council is ensuring pupils take responsibility. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and know how to keep safe. Absence rates remain stubbornly high, despite good procedures to try to reduce them. A few pupils do not come to school often enough. Pupils' personal development and well-being is satisfactory.

The headteacher has been the key to improving the school and has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has driven the development of staff-shared responsibility for raising standards and encouraged improvements in governance. In addition, innovations such as new strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour have dramatically reduced the number of exclusions. Subject leaders and teachers now all have a clear picture of pupils' achievement and can plan appropriately for the interventions needed to plug gaps in learning. Leadership of the school is now satisfactory and improving. Recent improvements indicate that the school clearly demonstrates satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The school uses the knowledge and expertise of the local authority effectively to support its improvement. However, because outcomes for pupils are not high enough, the school gives poor value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the EYFS with levels of skills and abilities that are well below those expected for children of their age. Their speaking skills are particularly weak. They make satisfactory progress, although by the time they enter Year 1, standards are still well below average in all areas of learning. They make better progress in communication, language and literacy although standards in this aspect remain particularly low. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there are some good elements. For example, lessons are well planned and organised. However, activities for children are hindered by inadequate accommodation and poor outside provision. As a result, opportunities to learn outdoors are very restricted. The staff make good use of the Forest School. Children thoroughly enjoyed the walk to this facility during the inspection and adults took every opportunity to enhance children's speaking and numeracy skills as they explored puddles and described the differences after a snow covering had disappeared. Children are well looked after in a caring atmosphere with an emphasis on sharing, working together and promoting children's social development through purposeful play. Consequently, children make good progress in their personal development. Staff are now making more effective use of assessment information to monitor children's achievement and future needs. Arrangements for children starting school are good with strong links between pre-school providers and parents. Leadership of the EYFS is satisfactory. The new phonics programme is starting to improve children's language skills and the employment of a speech therapist is helping to improve staff skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' achievement and standards in English and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2, by increasing the proportion of good teaching.
- Improve the levels of attendance especially for those pupils who regularly do not come to school.
- Improve the accommodation and outdoor learning environment for children in the EYFS.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are exceptionally low in English and mathematics, and below average in science. The underachievement in Key Stage 2 is slowly reducing, with new initiatives beginning to lead to improvements. However, there is insufficient good teaching for pupils to catch up quickly enough. Pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 because of the improved teaching. However, because of children's low level of skills on entry into the EYFS, standards in Key Stage 1 remain exceptionally low. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they often work in small groups where activities are well matched to their individual needs. The few pupils who provide challenging behaviour are also well supported in specific learning support units so that they make adequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are very friendly, generally polite and welcoming and speak to visitors warmly. They have good relationships with adults in school and say they enjoy school and making friends. Pupils'

personal development including their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory. Moral development is strong due to the 'Respect and Values' project. Behaviour is improving and where teaching is consistently good and teachers have high expectations, behaviour is good. A significant number of parents are not happy about the standard of behaviour, but inspection evidence shows this has improved and is satisfactory overall. Pupils know how to keep fit and healthy and pupils really enjoy sport and exercise. The Eco group is enabling pupils to make a positive contribution to recycling and the local community. There is an effective school council bringing about changes such as asking for playground markings. Pupils enjoy taking part in extra-curricular clubs and school trips and the responsibility of being mentors and 'buddies' to other pupils. Low standards in basic skills means pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their school or future work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and have improved due to the careful monitoring and support by the headteacher. Improved planning and assessment are helping the teachers to assess the pupils' levels effectively and pitch work more accurately. Speaking and listening skills are taught well. Many teachers now successfully use creative ways to engage pupils in learning such as interactive whiteboards, videos and small whiteboards. Where teaching is good, lessons move along at a crisp pace and pupils of all abilities are given good opportunities to participate in class discussions and other activities. However, there are still too many lessons when there is a lack of challenge and few opportunities for pupils to undertake collaborative or independent activities. Pupils know their targets and how improve their work. Teachers marking has improved and is now more consistent throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The programme of personal, social and health education is helping pupils to relate to each other by introducing themes such as 'friendship'. Good use is made of outside providers such as the Family Learning Centre for relationships education and the police for drugs awareness. Effective modifications to the curriculum ensure pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or challenging behaviour make improved progress. The school has started to develop links between subjects, but on occasions the content does not always make learning exciting enough. Pupils are not yet involved in planning and evaluating their own learning. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to learn about different parts of the world through projects on Africa, Mexico and Madagascar ensuring they begin to understand the differences between life in this country and elsewhere in the world. Information and communication technology provision is improving and staff are making more use of ICT to support pupils' learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care by the very committed staff team is a strength of the school. Social skills are improved through the successful 'Respect and Values' education programme. Procedures for safeguarding pupils fulfil statutory requirements. The school effectively identifies vulnerable pupils and makes effective provision for them. The

school works well with community support services and has started developing more effective links with parents. There has been a particular focus on ensuring that they have more immediate access to staff. There are satisfactory induction and transfer arrangements in place to ensure pupils move through each stage of their education smoothly. The school makes good use of target-setting and pupils generally know the levels they are working towards. Teachers' effective marking is now beginning to show pupils the next steps they need to take to improve, which in turn, is contributing to improved rates of progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has accurately identified its strengths and weaknesses through monitoring of teaching and effective analysis of data. The headteacher shows good leadership and a great determination to raise standards. She has introduced a number of successful initiatives that have improved teaching and learning. Subject leaders are now focusing more precisely on the areas that need improving and beginning to introduce appropriate strategies to make it happen. Through the introduction of improved tracking procedures, senior leaders are starting to analyse carefully pupils' performance and to identify potential underachievement. Staff are working effectively in partnership with the local authority to bring about improvements. Governors are beginning to act as 'critical friends'. The school sets challenging targets. Last year these were not always met, due to lower rates of pupil progress, however progress towards targets is quickly improving. A satisfactory range of local activities has improved pupils' understanding of community issues, but opportunities are insufficiently broad to ensure pupils increase their understanding of broader national and global issues. Given the school leaders' successes in improving aspects of the school, there is satisfactory capacity to improve.

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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	3
The extent to which 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 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	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

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

14 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birchen Coppice Primary School, Kidderminster, DY11 7JJ

Thank you for making us very welcome in your school when we visited recently. You were all very friendly and spoke to us very warmly. Thank you for telling us about the school and showing us your work.

We were particularly impressed to see how well you behaved in class and in assembly. You told us that you enjoy school and that you like your teachers and you think that they deal with any bullying or other incidents well and we agree with you. We saw that you all understood the targets that the teachers gave you and knew what you needed to do to make your work even better. However, not all of you come to school regularly enough.

Your headteacher and the staff look after you well and provide some interesting things for you to do, such as trips and visits and extra activities to make learning more interesting. This includes taking you outside to learn or showing you videos so you can enjoy writing. The school council is doing a good job, helping to make things better by asking for certain things to be improved. We know you understand how to keep healthy and do physical exercise.

In the last few years, not all of you have learnt as quickly as you should have. Some of you are having to catch up. The school is beginning to make improvements to help you make better progress with your work. We think you can learn even more, in new interesting ways and these are the key things we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do.

- Increase the number of good lessons so that you all can do as well as you can in English and mathematics and make good progress in your work.
- Make sure all pupils come to school as often as they can.
- Improve the classroom and outside learning area for pupils in the Reception and Nursery classes.

You can help with this by continuing to enjoy your learning, working hard and coming to school regularly.

With best wishes

Susan Currie Lead inspector