

Beecholme Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102631
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	323669
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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)	220
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	Dr David Darling
Headteacher	Ms Kaye Seamer
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Edgehill Road Mitcham CR4 2HZ
Telephone number	020 8640 4795
Fax number	020 8646 6043

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school. Almost 80% of the pupils are from various different minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest group is of South Asian heritage and many children are from families who have come to the country as Tamil refugees. A high proportion of pupils - more than half - are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Their main learning needs are moderate learning difficulties and behavioural and emotional difficulties. Not all of the pupils join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which comprises a Nursery and Reception class. Mobility is quite high, and an above average proportion of pupils join and leave the school part of the way through their primary education.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Beecholme provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. 'The school is caring and has a good community feel': this is the view of the great majority of parents. The good care, guidance and support that their children are given ensures that pupils' individual needs are catered for to help them learn. This is especially the case for pupils with learning difficulties and the many pupils who join the school at an early stage of learning English. Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language was identified as a weakness in the last inspection report but it is much improved and is now a strength of the school. As a result, many of these pupils make good progress.

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception Years. Standards are below average in Years 1 to 6, but this represents satisfactory progress in relation to pupils' often low starting points. More-able pupils do not always do as well as they could because they are not always challenged enough in lessons. However, pupils' work shows that this is improving as a result of the feedback that leaders have given teachers when they have monitored lessons. Increasingly, teachers are matching work to pupils' different capabilities and they are directing questions to extend pupils more, rather than just taking answers from those who put up their hands. Although many lessons move forward at a good pace, teachers sometimes set activities for pupils that fill time rather than driving their learning forward. This was the case, for example, when pupils were engaged in completing jigsaw puzzles during what should have been a 'guided reading' session.

The school has had particular success in creating an environment where pupils are increasingly eager to learn. As a parent commented, 'I am satisfied that my child is in a happy, safe and multicultural environment.' Links made between different subjects mean that pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are increasingly reinforced during other activities. In a singing lesson, for example, pupils learning new lyrics were reminded of the work they had done on rhyme earlier that day in literacy. Pupils learn enthusiastically about the environment and about their own and each other's different cultures and beliefs. These contribute to Beecholme being such a friendly and harmonious place, and parents and pupils alike describe the impact the school has had on improving the behaviour of even those pupils who struggle to control their emotions.

School leaders can rightly celebrate this and other successes, and the confidence that parents have in how accessible the school is and how it supports families as well as the pupils themselves. In the words of a parent, 'The staff go out of their way to be helpful.' The three-year school improvement plan is comprehensive and sets out appropriate priorities, but it does not set out measurable success criteria for progress and standards and some of its timescales lack precision. This has contributed to the overly positive view that leaders and governors have of the school's overall effectiveness. Nevertheless, there have been improvements as a result of leaders' monitoring, which has given them an otherwise accurate picture of what the school does well and where further developments are needed.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children begin in the Nursery with skills that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress in becoming independent, happy learners so that, by the end of the Reception

Year, children are working within the early learning goals. This is due to careful planning of activities that capture their interest, so that they are keen to learn. As a parent put it, 'My son has enjoyed every day here.' The increased focus on developing children's reading and writing skills is having a positive impact on developing these skills and prepares them well for transition to Year 1. For example, children made appropriate use of prepositions such as above, under and in front of during their lively re-creation of the Going on a Bear Hunt story. Children work collaboratively with each other and enjoy each other's company. In this well-run provision observations of what children know and can do are used well to plan for the next stage in their learning. Although partnerships with parents are strong, there is scope for developing these further by better equipping parents to continue consistently at home the work started by the school in teaching letters and sounds. The spacious outdoor environment includes a range of climbing and balancing equipment. It offers children good opportunities for play and physical development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that, in all lessons, activities are planned which move all pupils' learning on, and that able pupils are consistently challenged and extended.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school improvement plan as a management tool by including measurable targets and clear timescales that enable leaders and governors to better gauge success.

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

Standards in the Year 2 assessments have risen since the last inspection and were average in 2008. They have fallen back this year because the class has had changes of teacher that made it difficult for the pupils to settle and which slowed their learning at the start of the year. In the Year 6 tests standards have remained below average and the gap behind national standards has widened since the last inspection, although teacher assessments indicate that standards have risen this year. Year 6 test scores give a misleading picture of pupils' progress because of the relatively high proportion of pupils who join and leave the school part way through their primary education. Those who come from overseas, including children of refugee families, have no Key Stage 1 scores against which to measure their progress. The school's comprehensive tracking of each pupil's progress shows achievement to be satisfactory, including for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Many of the pupils who join the school with little or no English make good progress. The relatively small proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in the Year 6 national tests indicates that more-able pupils do not all do as well as they could. In 2008 rather fewer attained Level 5 in the national tests than teachers expected. The progress that pupils make in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares them adequately for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance levels and in their positive views of and attitudes to school. Just occasionally, some pupils' attention wanes when they

have to listen passively for too long, but, in the main, pupils listen well to teachers and to each other. They cooperate well when working in pairs and small groups. Relationships throughout the school are good, including between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, and pupils treat each other with respect. Pupils feel safe. They say, 'Teachers are always there', and are reassured by adults' presence around the school because they are able to 'sort out' any rare incidents of bullying. The behaviour seen during the inspection was good, and pupils report that behaviour is much improved. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, including when using the internet. They happily make healthy choices at mealtimes and actively participate in the many extra-curricular clubs, such as the 'running club' which is helping to develop their awareness of the benefits of physical exercise. They undertake responsible roles as school council and 'Eco club' members and have contributed to improving the quality of the school environment. Older pupils take a particular pride in the opportunities they have to help younger ones. Bilingual pupils also act as translators, helping those who are new to the school and new to English.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils well and their management of classes has helped to improve pupils' behaviour throughout the school. Lessons often move at a brisk pace, with varied activities that help to motivate the pupils to concentrate and try their best. Teaching assistants and other adults provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English, but they are not always used to best effect when the teacher is addressing the whole class. Although teachers plan work that is broadly matched to pupils' different abilities, there are still occasions when work is not as challenging as it could be for more-able pupils. Sometimes opportunities are missed to pose questions to pupils to make them think more about what they are doing and so accelerate their learning. For example, in a Key Stage 1 class those who had finished their written work early were allowed to play with coloured wooden beads, threading them randomly on a string. The opportunity was missed to set them the challenge of, for example, compiling repeating patterns of varying complexity to build on work they had done in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Opportunities for pupils to celebrate their rich cultural diversity are very strong. For example, pupils celebrate with ethnic food at Eid, Diwali and Christmas. The curriculum is adapted well to reflect the needs and experience of pupils. For example, the study of 'island homes' in Years 1 and 2 looks at life in Sri Lanka rather than the fictional Scottish island used in many other schools. Staff have also revised the curriculum to give an increased focus on enjoyable practical activities such as drama, music, gardening, information and communication technology and the sustainability project on the environment. These and other subjects are being used to help pupils to develop and apply their basic skills in numeracy and writing. However, not all of the school's initiatives are consistently followed through. For example, planned sessions for pupils to practise and develop their reading skills do not always involve all the pupils in reading-related activities. The curriculum is enhanced well through pupils' participation in extra-curricular clubs and trips, including a residential activity week where pupils develop life skills such as team-building and overcoming challenges.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school complies with all statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe. It liaises well with external agencies for support and advice in addressing the needs of vulnerable pupils and those who need extra help with their learning. Pupils have the added benefit of therapeutic support in school which is helping them to improve their behaviour and better prepare them for when they move on to secondary school. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those at the early stages of learning English receive good levels of support, which enable them to make at least similar progress to their peers. Teachers' marking gives pupils helpful guidance on how to improve their work. In some cases teachers pose questions that start a real dialogue with the pupils that make them think more about their work, but this is not the case in every class. Pupils have and refer to their individual targets, particularly in writing, but these are not always updated frequently enough, especially for the more-able pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, leadership team and governors have successfully tackled the issues for improvement set out in the last inspection report. These have been slow to have an impact on standards, however. In part, this is because the school's planning for improvement is not as sharp as it could be. The school improvement plan does not set out measurable success criteria for standards or rates of progress and some of the timescales are too imprecise to be useful to governors as a tool for holding the school to account. This contributes to the school's overly positive picture of its effectiveness and means that its capacity to improve is satisfactory rather than better. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. In addition to Beecholme's success in broadening pupils' horizons and awareness of their own and other's cultures, the school plays an important role in welcoming refugee and other families and helping them to settle in and to support their children's learning.

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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 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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
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?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
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

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

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

06 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beecholme Primary School, Mitcham, CR4 2HZ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Beecholme is giving you a satisfactory education and the school has many good features. As many of your parents told us, it takes good care of you and it is helping you all to settle in and get on so well together. You are really trying to concentrate hard in lessons and everyone is doing their best to behave well.

The children in Orange, Lemon and Cherry get off to a good start. Those of you in the other classes make reasonable progress, although we think, and your headteacher and other school leaders agree, you could be doing better. The way teachers bring different subjects together is helping to make learning more interesting and fun, but some of you could be pushed to learn at a faster rate. You can help by telling your teachers whenever you find the work a bit too easy. We have also asked teachers to make sure that the activities that they give you to do in lessons always help to move your learning on so that you all make good progress. Tell your teachers, too, when you think you have achieved your targets. That way they can be sure to give you new targets to help you to improve your work in other ways.

The school has improved in lots of ways since the last time it was inspected. It is now giving much better help, for example, to those of you who are new to learning English. The changes in the school have not done so much to raise standards so that you all do well in the Year 6 tests. We believe that one of the reasons for that is the school's planning. School leaders and governors have a three-year plan that sets out the priorities for improving the school. We have asked them to make that more useful by including clear, measurable success criteria – much as you all have when the teachers set out the learning objectives for your lessons. That, and firmer deadlines, will help them see how well they are doing in meeting the targets they set for improving the school.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector