

Birtley East Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108337
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	324748
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Gilbert
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Rickeard
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2007
School address	Highfield Birtley Chester le Street DH3 1QQ
Telephone number	0191 4102551
Fax number	0191 4102551
Email address	birtleyeastcommunityprimaryschool@gateshead.gov.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, and held meetings with two governors, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, staff with middle management responsibilities, teachers and other support staff who work in the school. The inspectors also spoke with pupils in lessons and around the school, in addition to holding a more formal meeting with a group representing most age groups. The inspectors observed the vast majority of the school's work, and looked at 80 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 14 questionnaires returned by staff and 87 questionnaires returned by pupils. A range of school documentation was read, including details relating to safeguarding procedures in place at the school.

- attainment at Key Stage 2
- the attainment profile for different abilities, especially higher and lower attainers
- the quality of teaching as an indication of sufficient challenge to all abilities to raise standards and improve their progress
- the impact of assessment procedures in raising aspirations of pupils and as an aid to improving the quality of teaching and learning
- the impact of leadership and management across the school to determine the capacity to improve further.

Information about the school

Birtley East is broadly average in size, with marginally more girls than boys on roll. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is over twice the national average. The percentages of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs are broadly in line with national averages. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Birtley East Community Primary School is providing a satisfactory and improving standard of education for its pupils.

Pupils' attainment is showing signs of improving from the previous inspection and although standards are broadly average when pupils leave the school, standards at Key Stage 1 are still too low. Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage have also improved, although children's standards are still below the levels expected for their age when they start their statutory schooling. Overall, however, given the very low standards when the children start in the Nursery, this represents good progress. Pupils do not always make the consistent and even progress needed, especially in writing and mathematics; in both these areas pupils are making slower progress than seen in the other core subject areas.

Teaching is satisfactory, occasionally good. Pupils are generally attentive learners, who behave well throughout their time in school. The good-quality relationships between pupils, and with staff in school, account for the high levels of enjoyment and the feeling of safety that pupils experience. All reasonable efforts are made to safeguard pupils in all aspects of their lives at school. Attendance is broadly average, and pupils' participation in additional activities provided by the school is satisfactory.

The school is continuing to develop its curricular provision satisfactorily to ensure that all the pupils develop their basic skills in reading, writing and number. The recent development of the 'creative curriculum' is at a relatively early stage of implementation. However, this cross-curricular approach to pupils' learning has yet to be consolidated and planned as effectively as is seen in literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and management of the school are good. There is a close and effective working relationship between governors and senior staff, which is resulting in a shared vision for future improvements. Senior managers and governors know where improvements are needed and the recent combined efforts of all who work in the school, or are linked with it, are beginning to bring about some of these improvements; for example, the raising of standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2009. Overall, the capacity to improve further is good.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in all core subjects at Key Stage 1 to ensure that each year more

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pupils achieve closer to the national averages in the core subjects.

- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by adopting a whole-school approach in which both areas are targeted priorities across the whole curriculum.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Overall, the general trend in pupils' attainment since the previous inspection has been broadly average at Key Stage 2 and significantly below at Key Stage 1. However, the unvalidated data for 2009 show that improvements have been achieved at both key stages, with standards remaining broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2, and the gap between the school and national averages closing at Key Stage 1. Although pupils' overall progress is satisfactory, it is uneven from key stage to key stage and across the range of subjects taught. Progress in writing and mathematics, in particular, are too slow. However, by the time pupils reach the end years of Key Stage 2 they have regained some of the ground lost earlier in the school.

The vast majority of pupils show interest in their work, and feel that the school supports them well in their learning. Most pupils are able to work well as individuals or in small groups. However, in a number of lessons seen during the inspection teachers talked for too long and this limited these important learning experiences. Where this occurred, the pace of learning for all pupils was affected. Pupils generally listen carefully to teacher-led introductions, and are keen to answer questions about aspects of their learning. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make satisfactory progress because of the targeted support in lessons. However, the progress of the higher attainers is occasionally too slow because of the unchallenging nature of the learning tasks set for them.

Across the different age groups, pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school; aspects confirmed by the overwhelming majority of parents and carers. A very small number of parents and carers, and pupils, remain concerned at the behaviour of a small minority, but the behaviour seen during the inspection was always at least good. Unacceptable behaviour is challenged quickly and pupils say that they feel confident that they can always seek advice and help from a member of staff, if the need arises. The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award, which reflects its promotion of eating healthily as part of developing the all-round well-being of pupils. The school's involvement and partnership work in physical education and school sport encourages pupils' participation in regular exercise. Attendance is broadly average, with a decreasing number of pupils who need targeted intervention to help them improve their regular attendance at school.

Pupils have a good understanding of the beliefs and values of others within school, but less so of the wider community. All pupils appear to appreciate the need to work collaboratively in lessons, and all seem to know, clearly, the difference between right and wrong. While pupils understand about different world religions, they have less understanding and appreciation of those faiths within their own local communities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some that is good; for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in the teaching of the core subjects of English and mathematics, and in the later stages of Key Stage 2. Where teaching of this quality is seen, pupils make progress in their learning at a pace that is well matched to their capabilities. Generally, all teachers show a good level of subject knowledge and confidence in teaching literacy and numeracy, although too often whole-class question and answer sessions last too long. This limits the opportunities for effective independent learning, where pupils take far greater responsibility for various aspects of their work. Although this affects all pupils, the greatest impact is seen in the work of the higher attaining pupils. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers' marking is regular, although not always as helpful as it could be in identifying how pupils could improve the quality of their work. There is a well-established system for collecting information about pupils' progress against age-related expectations in the core subjects of English and mathematics. However, this work is not yet as developed in the other subjects taught. Although pupils refer confidently to their learning targets, inspectors found that they

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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were unclear in terms of what these meant about improving the quality of their work in order to reach a higher standard.

The quality of the curricular provision is satisfactory. The coverage in numeracy and literacy is generally good, and is helping the pupils to develop and consolidate many of the key skills required for the next stage of their education. The focused work in these two core areas is beginning to help raise standards and improve pupils' progress, although this is still too variable across different year groups in the school. For example, writing is not yet of a consistent standard to impact on the work that pupils do more broadly across all curricular areas and, in some year groups, pupils are still underperforming in mathematics relative to their capabilities. The school's work on its 'creative curriculum', namely, a cross-curricular approach to lessons, is still at a very early stage of implementation. Although senior staff are confident that it will deliver a suitable range of learning activities for all pupils, it has yet to attain the same level of coherence and consistency of delivery as is currently seen in literacy and numeracy.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Safeguarding procedures are good and contribute significantly to the quality of care and support provided throughout the school. The pupils feel valued, indicating that staff appreciate their contributions in lessons and to school life more generally.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Overall, leadership and management are good, which represents an improvement from the previous inspection when the school successfully came out of special measures. The effective working relationships between governors and senior managers encompass a shared sense of purpose and ambition to improve, and underpin a clear emphasis on equality for all those associated with the school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers, pupils, staff and governors recognise that a number of important areas are improving, especially provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' standards at Key Stage 2, and the overall quality of teaching and learning. The evaluation and monitoring strategies used by staff and governors are proportionate to the needs of the school and individual teachers. There is a clear system of regular scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, primarily in the two core areas of English and mathematics, which is helping senior managers to be well informed about the improvements in outcomes being achieved by different year groups and targeted pupils. Overall, the

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school has shown that it has good capacity to improve further.

The current school improvement plan is satisfactory in identifying priorities and actions for improvement. However, the plan lacks sufficient detail of the targets in those areas that seek improvement in specific outcomes for pupils. As a result, the plan is less useful than it might be, both to senior managers and governors, in accurately assessing the progress being made over the life of the plan. The support from governors in holding the school to account is good. Governors' recent notes of visit, with accompanying reports, indicate that the governing body has formulated an agreed structure for overseeing the work of the school. These reports provide a helpful reinforcement of what is being provided in some aspects of the school's work.

The vast majority of parents and carers are positive about the school. However, a minority of those who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that they would like the school to take greater account of their views. The broader partnership links are generally good. While the school is alert to ensuring that pupils develop an appreciation of life outside of school, the overall current provision is satisfactory. While the immediate links with families and the local authority are developing well, the school has yet to develop further its broader local, national and international links. Overall, therefore, the school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory.

The school has secure safeguarding systems in place to ensure that pupils are kept safe. In other aspects of the school's work, including ensuring the suitability of adults to work with pupils, the school meets all statutory regulations. Pupils are confident that, when needed, there is always an adult to whom they can go to seek support and advice.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. When children start in the Nursery class, their skills, attributes and personal qualities are well below the levels expected for their age. However, because of the secure and trusting relationships between children and staff; the good-quality planning, which results in focused learning experiences for all the children; and the positive and open links between the school and parents and carers, children make good overall progress. Although children's standards at the start of their statutory schooling are below the levels normally seen at this age, the overall improvement that the vast majority make at the school is impressive. This progress is also due to the good-quality leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. There is a shared sense of purpose and desire to improve, which parents and carers appreciate and readily embrace. The environment is safe and secure, with all statutory welfare regulations met. The ongoing use of information about children's progress across all areas of learning is helping the school to know, quite accurately, what else needs to be done to ensure future improvements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are positive about the school's provision for their children. In four of the 13 questions, the response from parents and carers reached 10% or more disagreement; these four being information about pupils' progress at school, dealing with unacceptable behaviour, taking account of parents' and carers' views, and the leadership of the school. While a number of parents and carers wrote comments on the inspection questionnaire, there was no significant pattern to these and most praised the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birtley East Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspector received 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



Dear Pupils

I am writing on behalf of the three inspectors who recently visited your school. We really enjoyed our time in your school, so we would like to thank you for making our visit so interesting. Would you pass on our thanks to your parents and carers, who kindly took the time to return the inspection questionnaire. We were particularly pleased to receive a number of questionnaires that had some very helpful comments, all of which were read very carefully by the inspectors.

I should like to highlight some of the important things that we found out about the school. These include the following.

- Birtley East Community Primary School offers you a satisfactory and improving standard of education.
- Standards are improving. They are average by the time you leave the school at the end of Year 6, but they are still too low at the end of Key Stage 1. We are, therefore, asking the school to raise standards at Key Stage 1.
- The progress you make in your learning is satisfactory, but not yet consistently good enough in writing and mathematics. We are asking the school to improve your progress in these two areas.
- All of you who spoke with inspectors said you feel safe in school.
- Your understanding of the school community is good, but you need to develop your understanding and appreciation of other communities outside of school.
- Your behaviour is good.
- Teaching is satisfactory, occasionally good.
- The school keeps you safe when you are in school.
- The overwhelming majority of your parents and carers are positive about the school.
- Governors, teachers and other staff who work in the school are doing a good job in helping the school to improve.

The inspection team is sure that with your continued good behaviour, good attendance and hard work, the school will make the further improvements needed.

Yours faithfully

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