

Beech Hill Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108441 |
| Local Authority | Newcastle upon Tyne |
| Inspection number | 324769 |
| Inspection date | 25 September 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Derek Neil HMI |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 282 |
| 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 | Mrs Sharon Little |
| Headteacher | Mrs Nicola Nelson-Taylor |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 January 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Linhope Road West Denton Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE5 2LW |
| Telephone number | 0191 2678113 |
| Fax number | 0191 2641240 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the way the school promotes community cohesion, standards and achievement, and the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form; national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with staff and pupils; and the parents' questionnaires. The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected by an Additional Inspector.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Beech Hill Primary is a school of above-average size in the Denton ward of Newcastle upon Tyne. The attainment of pupils when they start school in the Nursery and in Reception is well below that expected for children of their age, particularly in social and communication skills.

A very high number of pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are above-average proportions of pupils who use English as an additional language, including six who are at an early stage of acquisition, and of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups.

The school has the Healthy Schools Award, the International Schools Award, the Basic Skills Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. One parent neatly summed it up by writing, 'Beech Hill is a fabulous school in which every child, whatever their personal circumstances, is given the chance to fulfil their potential.' The inspection confirmed the many positive judgements made by a range of external organisations. The school is well on its way to realising its vision: 'to provide each child with the skills, self-belief and drive to reach high in life and for the school to be outstanding in all it provides and to be the heart and soul of the community.'

Pupils make good progress to reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Key Stage 1. They continue to make rapid progress and by the end of Key Stage 2 their standards are usually considerably higher than average. Given their starting points, this represents outstanding achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make similarly great strides and reach high standards.

Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported when they join the school and make progress that is at least good.

Pupils' personal development is excellent. They behave well in class and around the buildings. They feel safe at school and report that bullying is rare and is always dealt with effectively by staff. Racist abuse is unknown. Pupils know how to eat healthily, and all those interviewed were adamant they took regular exercise, walked to school, and ate at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. They appreciate the benefits of a relaxing massage, which is often provided in class by other pupils. They make an extremely valuable contribution to the school community; the school council, for example, plays a key role in appointing new staff, and the whole school raised funds for the Macmillan nurses after the recent tragic death of one of their classmates. The school provides pupils with exciting opportunities to develop skills that equip them for the world of work. For example, exercises based on television shows like the 'Dragons' Den' and 'The Apprentice' boost pupils' teamwork, confidence and understanding of the business world. Pupils enjoy school, especially the outdoor play equipment they have helped to introduce. However, despite considerable efforts by the school, their attendance has deteriorated since the last inspection and is below average.

The school's success is the result of the staff's efforts to make sure that learning is enjoyable. Teaching is good and in several classes outstanding. Lessons are characterised by the lively and enthusiastic way the teacher presents new material after carefully recapitulating what has already been learned and explaining what the new work is about. The emphasis is on getting pupils involved in practical and enjoyable activities, often based on games. In most classes the teacher manages pupils' behaviour very well but in a small number of lessons pupils lose concentration because the pace is too slow and the teacher does not notice that some pupils are not paying attention. The innovative curriculum provides a very good grounding in basic skills. Its two distinctive strengths are the use of attention-grabbing topics to teach the skills and knowledge that staff agree their pupils need and the regular occasions when the timetable is suspended for a day or a week. At these times pupils work in different groups on a wide range of interesting, creative and challenging activities.

Another key to the school's success is the excellent care that pupils receive. Staff know the children very well and tailor work carefully to meet their needs. A comprehensive system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress towards their challenging targets ensures that all achieve highly. The most able pupils are often given more difficult work than the rest of the class and

those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported in small groups with well designed programmes. Parents speak highly of the progress their children make because of the individual attention they receive. A child with dyspraxia, for example, which had not been identified at his previous school, is now doing well at Beech Hill. Another attributed her daughter's progress to the encouragement she had received to take on increasingly challenging work. Children and parents who have any concerns or problems are invited to use the services of the school's 'children's office' or the parent support adviser; staff providing these services help pupils with low self-esteem and encourage parents to become more involved in the life of the school. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has enjoyed some individual successes, for example with one family when the parents realised the effect persistent absence was having on their child's attainment. These efforts have had limited impact on the school's overall rate of attendance; managers recognise that swifter and even more imaginative action is needed.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear and ambitious vision for the school. She has overseen a number of improvements and is eager for more. Since the last inspection, standards in English have risen and governors have become far more aware of their responsibilities. Indeed, they now have a very good knowledge of the school and have very recently been awarded the governors' quality mark, only the third governing body in the country to achieve this. The school knows itself well. This is because the staff use data intelligently to identify strengths and weaknesses, and because the senior leaders regularly observe lessons, examine pupils' work, and take in weekly reflections from staff on how well their classes are doing. This good self-evaluation leads to effective plans that drive the improvements the school is making. As one parent put it, 'The school keeps on getting better and better.' The school has done some very good work to promote community cohesion, particularly in becoming established as a centre for parental involvement. It has not, however, done enough to develop pupils' understanding and valuing of cultural diversity in the wider community.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage is good with outstanding features. Children enter the Nursery with skills below those typical for their age. They achieve consistently well throughout the two years because the school provides a stimulating range of experiences and places a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills. By the time they reach the end of Reception most children reach the expected levels except in reading and writing. This reflects their low starting points in those skills. Personal development and well-being are outstanding and children achieve extremely well in this area. Although it is still early in the school year, the children have settled extremely well into sessions and their behaviour is outstanding. This is due to the very high levels of care, support and guidance provided by the staff, who work very effectively together. They provide children with a very clear understanding of the school's routines and expectations. The good quality of the breakfast club ensures those children who attend begin the school day ready to learn. Learning and development are good. Some teaching is outstanding particularly when staff interact with individuals to extend their thinking. In some sessions the pace is a little slow, which reduces the level of challenge for children. Leadership and management are good and the coordinator is very enthusiastic. The staff have prepared for the new Foundation Stage requirements very thoroughly and the planning for the curriculum is considered carefully. The provision indoors is very well balanced, but some opportunities are missed to extend children's learning outdoors in their independent play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance.
- Promote community cohesion further by giving pupils more opportunities to learn about and value cultural diversity.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| 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? | 1 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 1 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| How well do learners achieve? | 1 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 1 |

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

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| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |

The quality of provision

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| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 1 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 1 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 |
| 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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beech Hill Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 2LW

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly into your school. I enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play; talking about your school with you and your teachers; and looking at your work. Now I want to share with you what I found.

Beech Hill is an outstanding school. Here are some of the many things I liked about it.

- You told me you really like coming to school and feel safe there.
- You told me you like your lessons and the staff. I can see why: you have some very good teachers. They are always giving you exciting things to do.
- You are achieving high standards in your work. Well done!
- You know how important it is to eat healthily and take exercise. I was pleased to hear that all of those I met eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day and you all walk to school.
- You behave well in class and in the playground. You try hard in lessons and get on with your work without much supervision from the teacher. You should be proud of this.
- Your teachers and other staff take very good care of you. They are very keen to make sure you are happy and safe.
- Many of you are very grown up and help with the running of the school; the school council, for instance, has done much valuable work, such as helping to appoint new staff.
- The staff work very hard to make sure your parents are happy with and involved in your education.

I think you and your teachers could make the school even better and this is what I would like to happen now.

- Some of you do not come to school as often as you should. I have asked the school to do more to ensure that you are in class as much as possible. You can help by trying to get to school every day.
- I would like your teachers to help you to understand more about the different cultures that make up the society we live in.

You are lucky to go to such an excellent school. Thank you again for helping me with the inspection. It was a pleasure to meet you.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools