

The Beeches Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110756
Local Authority	City of Peterborough
Inspection number	325210
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	521
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 Sheila Brown
Headteacher	Mr Tim Smith
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Beech Avenue Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE1 2EH
Telephone number	01733 209877
Fax number	01733 209873

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is very much larger than average and serves pupils from the inner-city wards of Peterborough. Virtually all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, especially the British Pakistani community, but a growing number also come from Portugal and a range of Eastern European countries. English is used as an additional language by nearly the entire school. A great many pupils arrive or leave partway through any year and only about half the number on the school roll stay from Reception to Year 6. Over twice the national average has learning difficulties and / or disabilities. The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage provision in the form of a Reception class. Attainment on entry is exceptionally low. The school holds the Activemark, Healthy Schools and Community Cohesion awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has made marked improvements since the previous inspection. Leadership and management have recently been strengthened; there is a good and secure capacity for further improvement. Good governance and strong middle leadership are now in place. Self-evaluation is good and leads swiftly to beneficial changes. The school works well with the local authority, as in reviewing its management structure and training and development. The overwhelming majority of parents rightly have a very positive view of the school.

The school confidently welcomes a diverse and rapidly changing intake of pupils and meets their needs well. Effective assessment arrangements give a very reliable picture of pupils' requirements. Astute leadership ensures that the curriculum, teaching approaches and support arrangements match these needs. Reducing class sizes and appointing bilingual staff have been particularly helpful in making access to learning easier for many.

The overall quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Its general strengths of encouraging tone, decisive management of behaviour and good pace help all pupils to settle and know what is required of them. There is evidence of some exceptional teaching and a minority that is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers sustain a very lively pace, use lesson objectives and success criteria well and provide a wide range of work for different pupil groups. When progress is more limited, there is generally less clarity about the direction and expectations of the lesson.

Pupils achieve well, whatever their starting points. They make rapid gains in the Early Years Foundation Stage and many continue to progress in Key Stage 1, but departure and arrival of many pupils during the key stage depresses overall achievement, keeping Year 2 test results well below average. The absence of higher levels in English and mathematics partly reflects the greater proportion of satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 1 and too few lessons are highly challenging. In Key Stage 2, standards have risen recently and are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. In response to a sustained focus, the proportion meeting national expectations (Level 4) in writing is now above average. Reading standards have remained below average. There are fewer pupils gaining the higher standard (Level 5) than might be expected. Poor attendance and punctuality restrict some pupils' progress.

Personal development is good. Pupils' enjoy school and their behaviour is good. They show a very impressive awareness of the needs of others and respond well to guidance on personal safety and healthy lifestyles. Their readiness for the next stage of education is satisfactory, reflecting their standards in literacy numeracy and ICT. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a strong grasp of the many cultures represented in school and of others. Social development is excellent.

A well-designed curriculum strongly supports learning in lessons. The enrichment programme is extensive and pupils excel in sport and music, doing extremely well in regional and national competitions. Good care, guidance and support ensure that all statutory requirements are met and that pupils and parents are helped to maximise pupils' confidence, security and personal development. Arrangements for those with learning difficulties are good. The school is also secure and effective in its support of pupils using English as an additional language. There is some, but less, support and guidance for more able pupils and this is reflected in the scarcity of high level performance in tests.

Links with the local area are good, as is the contribution to understanding community and citizenship issues worldwide. The school builds on its contacts with parents and other adults from the minority ethnic communities it serves and consequently has many good international contacts.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

All children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage are at a very early stage of learning to speak English. The great majority have a limited vocabulary and serious difficulty in understanding ordinary, everyday words. Many are at an extremely early stage in developing reading and writing skills. Staff grasp every opportunity to extend their vocabulary and encourage them to engage in discussion. The calm, productive atmosphere encourages them to explore their surroundings and select their own resources. Some children are beginning to be able to explain their choices and answer simple questions about the activity they are engaged in. There is a good balance between adult-directed activities and free-choice activities. Learning is assessed continually to identify and plan for their next steps. Leadership is good and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Good teaching, detailed planning and clear expectations support learning well and good progress is made in all areas of the early years curriculum, but standards by the end of Reception are well below what might be expected of children of the same age because of their very low attainment on entry. Children's welfare is a top priority and staff respond sensitively to the needs of each individual. Children are taught about eating healthy food through discussion at snack time and about keeping fit through the movement to music programme, which they greatly enjoy. Personal development is good and children happily share equipment, are confident in the way they approach adults and listen carefully to their peers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further in both key stages by lifting reading standards to match those in writing and by extending the provision beyond lessons for the most able.
- Improve the punctuality and attendance of a significant minority, so fewer pupils find their learning restricted by frequent absence or lateness.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school helps a remarkably varied range of pupils achieve well from very different start points. Standards have recently risen in English, mathematics and science, so that pupils leaving Year 6 reach broadly average standards, despite many arriving part way through their primary education. A high proportion of pupils need help to overcome a lack of English and in some cases of any formal education in their country of origin. The majority make better than expected progress in English language acquisition and good gains in their other subjects. This reflects good teaching, including the support of numerous teaching assistants, very careful assessment and good use of data to focus extra help. In some areas, standards are above national levels, for instance, in the proportion gaining Level 4 in writing, the result of a sustained focus on encouraging pupils to write from their first-hand experience. Writing now out-strips reading performance significantly. Fewer pupils reach the higher levels in either key stage and this partly reflects limited extra provision for able pupils. Regular absenteeism and lateness hinder the progress of a minority.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

There is a strong sense of community and pupils are extremely caring and supportive of each other. Their social development is excellent. Their behaviour in and outside lessons is good and they respect and trust teachers and other adults, so that they make good progress in their work. They are eager to be involved in community activities, such as musical performances and support for charity organisations. The school council and prefect system involve pupils in decision-making and they develop a good understanding of being good citizens. Spiritual, moral, and cultural development is good and enhanced by a very wide range of multi-cultural activities, including dance, at which many excel. Sporting and cultural activities make a very positive impact on personal development and achievement through raising self-esteem and confidence. Pupils show a good understanding of the beliefs and values of others. The strong emphasis on emotional well-being allows them to develop a good understanding of how to express and manage their feelings.

Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is in line to meet the challenging targets agreed with the local authority. However, it is still lower than the national average. Poor attendance and punctuality are reflected in the depressed achievement of some pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils help the pupils to become confident, independent learners. Lessons are well planned and generally take account of the wide range of ability in each class. Explanations are clear, the pace of learning is usually good and a broad range of teaching and learning strategies is used to engage and motivate pupils, which leads to good progress overall. Teachers and pupils use whiteboard technology and computers well. Assessment procedures are good, with outstanding features in the detailed tracking of individuals' progress year by year. In lessons, learning objectives are usually made very clear and pupils know what to do to achieve them. Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a major contribution to the quality of learning. They have received good training and have become increasingly skilled. Marking of work is informative, telling pupils what they do well and identifying areas for improvement. As a result, the majority of lessons are good, and there is evidence of outstanding practice. A minority of lessons is satisfactory, where pace and sense of direction are less well developed: these are more common in Key Stage 1 than 2.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The much-improved curriculum makes a good contribution to academic and personal development. Each block of new work begins with a first-hand experience, maybe a visit, a visitor or a series of role-play activities. A result is that pupils' writing is often imaginative and full of interesting vocabulary, even though the large majority of children are learning English as an additional language. For example, pupils bringing their knowledge of the Great Fire of London into a literacy lesson showed confidence in speaking and listening and creativity in their written work. Pupils enjoy the formal curriculum and benefit from the enrichment

programme, which includes creative opportunities in art, dance and drama. They can learn a variety of modern foreign languages, such as French, Spanish and Urdu, and play musical instruments from a wide selection, in groups and individual lessons. There are fewer out-of-school activities for gifted and talented pupils than there might be.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The safe and supportive environment helps pupils achieve well and value their own and other languages and cultures. Teachers give good feedback about the next steps in learning so they know how to improve.

Safeguarding arrangements, including child protection, meet the requirements fully. The school is effective in identifying pupils at risk and in putting strategies in place to support them in their learning. It gives particular attention to meeting the needs of a very mobile population and ensuring newcomers receive as much support as possible at an early stage. Pupils are actively involved as 'buddies' and translators to support those with little or no English. Considerable work has been done to improve attendance, with detailed and regularly updated data to identify patterns and trends to help staff target intervention. This is strengthened by good links with other agencies and with parents. Parents now have a better understanding of what the school expects of them. A minority of pupils still do not respond to current measures to raise attendance and punctuality and additional encouragement is required.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's marked improvement since the previous inspection is testimony to the good quality of its leadership and management. Standards have risen, pupils' progress rates are better and teaching quality has improved. Much of this stems from a sustained period of extensive and rigorous monitoring by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Self-evaluation is good and has highlighted strengths and weaknesses on which the school has acted. More recently, subject leaders and other managers have begun to contribute equally well, ensuring that the capacity for further improvement is good. The governing body is well informed and very supportive, playing a valuable role in creating good links between the school and the local community. Pupils' progress is now good and standards broadly average, but the school is aware that attendance, aspects of teaching in Key Stage 1 and provision for the more able require further improvement.

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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?	2
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	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	3
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?	2
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?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Beeches Primary School, Peterborough, PE1 2EH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school. A special thank you goes to those pupils who gave up part of their lunchtime to speak to one of the inspectors.

We enjoyed our visit because you are at a good school, with many things working well. Your own behaviour was good so it made it easy for us to talk with you and visit lessons.

The main things that impressed us, besides your good behaviour, were:

- the good progress you make
- the way the school welcomes pupils and parents from so many different backgrounds and finds ways to support them well
- the good quality of teaching and learning
- the good leadership and management of the school
- your personal development, especially your care for others and your enjoyment of school
- areas of special success, such as music, dance, sport in general and especially cricket.

In order to improve further the school needs to:

- raise standards further so that all results in tests match the good ones you reach in writing; provide more challenge clubs and activities for the most able pupils so that more of them can reach the very highest levels
- reduce lateness and absence. Too many of you find your progress hindered by lateness or frequent absence. You can help by getting to school on time each day.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at The Beeches,

Yours sincerely

Bob Drew

Lead inspector