

Butterknowle Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114102
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325946
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Yvonne Clare

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)	48
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 Jeanette Newell
Headteacher	Mr Paul Ruane
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Butterknowle Bishop Auckland County Durham DL13 5PB
Telephone number	01388 718369
Fax number	01388 718369

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

Butterknowle is a small primary school in a rural area on the outskirts of Bishop Auckland. It serves a varied social community within a setting which is quite isolated. All the pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals has increased this year and is now above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, and mobility in the school is high. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes, one of which includes children from the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has been accredited with several awards including the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. It has some good features. Its strengths lie in pupils' good levels of personal development and the good start provided by the Early Years Foundation Stage. Its partnerships with others, through networks and links, are appropriate and serve to enhance provision for learning.

The school is extremely caring and makes sure that pupils feel safe and secure. It is warm, friendly and welcoming, with artwork providing a colourful, high quality learning environment. Parents are supportive of the school and they are rightly confident that their children are well cared for and enjoy school. One parent, representing the views held by many, remarked that, 'My child looks forward to going to school every day and always comes home happy and eager to tell us what they have been doing.'

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Pupils enjoy their time at the school, their above average attendance bearing testament to this. They take on positions of responsibility around school with enthusiasm, and the work of the school council contributes well to the school's development. Pupils are open and friendly and they are not afraid to share their feelings; they feel safe and know who to talk to if they face difficulties. Their attitudes to learning and behaviour in class and around the school are good. The pupils are well aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and willingly take part in a range of physical activities. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils start in Year 1 with broadly average skills. They make satisfactory progress overall and, by the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards, although variable due to the small cohorts, are broadly average. Within this overall picture, some pupils, especially the more able, do not always make enough progress. The results of teacher assessments and national tests show that standards are now rising and achievement is accelerating. Skilful teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well, ensuring these pupils are fully involved in activities and make similar progress to their classmates.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and manage them well. However, not all teaching takes sufficient account of the assessment of the pupils' abilities. Some groups of learners, most noticeably some older pupils in the mixed-age classes and more able pupils, are not consistently challenged. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the inclusion of all pupils including those needing additional support. The satisfactory curriculum uses the local environment well and is enriched by a wide range of clubs, trips and visitors.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. Pupils' pastoral needs are very well met and pupils feel well supported and cared for. They are beginning to be more involved in evaluating their own progress, but the marking of pupils' work and the use of targets is inconsistent and pupils are not always sure how they can improve.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher knows the school well and cares greatly about the needs of his pupils. Subject leaders undertake some monitoring of their subjects. However, they do not monitor improvement strategies regularly or rigorously enough to evaluate the impact on pupils' progress. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and demonstrates satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children get a valuable start to their learning in Reception. Children enter the school with skills that are below what is typical for their age. Comprehensive induction procedures, involvement of parents and effective teaching lead to good achievement. As a result, children enter Year 1 with much improved skills, overall attainment is average although slightly lower for some children in aspects of communication.

Children's welfare is effectively promoted. They thrive in the supportive environment and adults provide good role models. Relationships are strong and children feel safe and secure. Their behaviour is good and they engage themselves fully in the wide range of activities open to them, often initiated by themselves. Staff promote children's independence in learning well and plan activities according to the needs and interests of the group. An exciting outdoor environment has been created and outdoor activities are planned for and managed well. However, due to difficulties with access from the classroom and staffing constraints, this area cannot be accessed independently by the children. Assessment procedures are thorough and comprise both formal and incidental observations of children at work and play. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader manages the mixed setting well and together with her caring team of staff provides a seamless transition into Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure staff make better use of assessment so that activities challenge all pupils, particularly older and more able pupils in mixed-age classes.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking and the use of targets to inform all pupils what they must do next to improve.
- Extend the monitoring role of subject leaders to ensure that outcomes of monitoring result in actions that are rigorously evaluated and used to inform future planning.

A small proportion of 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 school are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. The small numbers of pupils in each cohort, at both key stages, mean that standards can appear to fluctuate from year-to-year, but the school has reliable evidence to show that standards are improving and achievement is accelerating throughout the school. Pupils start in Year 1 with standards that are broadly average although a few need extra help with aspects of communication. They make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and reach standards that are average in reading and mathematics and slightly below in writing. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show an improving picture and in 2008, standards at the end of Year 2 were broadly average.

The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 show standards are broadly in line with the national average. However, a below average proportion of pupils attain the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Current pupils in Year 6 are on course to meet their challenging targets in English and mathematics and overall standards are average. Throughout the school there is an increase in the number of pupils reaching the level expected for their

age but the more able pupils do not always make enough progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included and also make satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Parents are supportive and value the work of the school. Pupils have the same view. They enjoy their school and can think of no major way to improve it further. The sterling efforts of the school to improve attendance, which was an issue at the last inspection have really paid dividends and attendance is now above average. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and are fully aware of the need for a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, although pupils' awareness of cultures different to their own is not as extensive as it might be. Good relationships in school underpin pupils' thoughtful behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils thrive on the many responsibilities they have; older pupils, as 'buddies' and Year 6 helpers, are quick to support younger children and enjoy helping out and making sure that no one is lonely at breaks and lunchtimes. The school council is proud of the difference it makes, for example, organising charity skipping afternoons and good manners weekly awards. Pupils' progress in developing these skills helps to give them a sound preparation for the next stage of schooling and their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers form good working relationships with pupils and teaching assistants and this greatly enhances learning for all pupils especially those needing additional support. Many lessons include opportunities for discussion and collaborative work and pupils are enthusiastic learners. In the good lessons seen, teachers use a combination of clear learning objectives, brisk pace and a good range of techniques to help make learning enjoyable. Where teaching is satisfactory, expectations are not always high enough because teachers are not making effective use of assessment. This leads to activities for the more able pupils in mixed-age classes that do not consistently challenge and encourage their thinking skills. Teachers often tell pupils what they are going to learn so they understand the purpose of the lesson. Occasionally, it is unclear how success is going to be measured and this leaves pupils uncertain about how they can improve. A strength throughout the school is the management of pupils and this leads to lessons running smoothly.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is currently satisfactory, meeting all statutory requirements. There is an appropriate concentration on the core subjects of English and mathematics, with a particular, successful focus on improving writing. Work with consultants, in core subjects, is enhancing pupils' learning and building confidence well. Information and communication technology (ICT) is well resourced and all classrooms benefit from interactive whiteboards. Physical activity and links through the sports partnership provide valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in a wide variety of sports. Music opportunities are varied and pupils have the opportunity to learn guitar and recorder. Pupils learn French, and 'hands on' experiences in the form of trips,

visits and visitors, use the local environment to bring topics to life. The curriculum is based on a rolling programme to avoid repetition for the mixed-age classes. The needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met although the more able are not always provided with sufficiently challenging work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Pastoral care and support for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are good aspects of the school's work. All the staff know their pupils well and are vigilant in looking after pupils' welfare. The work of the committed team of teaching assistants ensures that pupils with academic or emotional difficulties are fully included in everything the school has to offer. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are fully in place and meet current guidelines. Pupils have the utmost confidence in their teachers and one commented that 'if anything is wrong we tell the teacher and it gets sorted - just like that'!

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Its effectiveness is hindered by variations in approaches to assessment and its subsequent use in encouraging pupils to evaluate their own learning. Targets are set for literacy and numeracy, but some pupils are unsure of them. The quality of marking varies between classes and between subjects; marking in English is better than in other subjects. At its best, it gives good guidance about how pupils can improve their work, but too few comments are effective in moving learning on and pupils are not always given opportunities to respond to any comments made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear leadership and presents a good role model for staff. He knows the school well including its strengths and where there is a need for improvement. As a result, he initiates and leads strategies to secure improvement and raise standards. Leaders at other levels, including subject leaders, undertake monitoring in a variety of ways. However, this monitoring role is not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, they do not evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives to check their impact on standards or use their findings to contribute to school improvement. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. It recognises what is required to improve pupils' understanding and has made the planning of activities to extend pupils' understanding of the wider national and global communities a priority. Governors are supportive of the school, undertake all statutory duties, and are in a position to become more actively involved in the monitoring of the school's progress. The school has worked hard to successfully address issues from the previous inspection.

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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?	3
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?	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	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**

3 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Butterknowle Primary School, Durham, DL13 5PB

Thank you for making me so welcome in your bright and happy school and for your help during the recent inspection. I loved seeing all your beautiful displays and thought how exciting they made your school look.

Your school is satisfactory with good features especially in your personal development. I enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say about your school and I thought you were really well behaved, polite and treated each other well. All the staff work very hard to help you do your best and all of you work as a team to make your school the happy school that it is.

- You told me that you like your school and enjoy your lessons as well as the clubs, visits and visitors. You are rightly very proud of your Healthy School award and enjoy your charity skipping afternoons that the school council organises.
- You know all about staying safe and being healthy. You also care for each other very well and enjoy all the jobs and responsibilities your teachers ask you to do.
- Everyone works hard to make sure that you are well cared for and that you enjoy school. However, I feel that with your teachers' help you can make the difference and help your school to continue to get better.

I know the teachers know you really well and I have asked them to help you to do better in your lessons by making sure that all of you, particularly those of you who are older or find learning easier, are given work that extends what you already know and makes you think really hard! They will also be checking carefully when new things are introduced to make sure that they are helping you to improve. I know that you have targets to work on in your lessons and that when the teachers mark your work they tell you what they like and sometimes how you can improve, but I have asked the school to always do this so you really understand what you must do to get better in your work.

It was a pleasure to visit your school. Keep working hard and coming to school every day, so that you continue to do well! Enjoy your long, summer holiday.

Yours faithfully

Yvonne Clare

Lead inspector