

Barley Croft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120050
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	327188
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Roy Bowers 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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	227
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	Charlotte Ghayr
Headteacher	Kevin Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Malham Close Beaumont Leys Leicester LE4 0UT
Telephone number	01162 359008
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is of average size. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. Approximately one third of the pupils are from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average. An exceptionally high proportion of pupils have a statement of special educational needs for learning and behavioural difficulties. A higher than average percentage of pupils join or leave the school during the school year. The skill levels of pupils when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage are well below those typical for children of that age. The school has a speech and language unit for up to 20 pupils between the ages of four and eight. Pupils come to the unit from the city of Leicester and Leicestershire. The school's governors are responsible for a breakfast club and after-school care club for pupils of the school which operate within the school building. Following the last inspection in November 2007, the school was judged to require significant improvement and was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and knows what needs to be done to improve. Most pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. Since the last inspection the school has effectively implemented several new initiatives which have raised standards in writing and begun to improve the quality of teaching. Most parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire said that they value the school highly and appreciate the care and support given to their children.

Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage and most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' progress is improving in most year groups, especially in Year 6 where pupils of all abilities are challenged well, especially in mathematics. However, in the majority of classes, the more able pupils do not make the progress they could because the work they are given is too easy. Although standards are improving, they remain exceptionally low. This is because of pupils' extremely low starting points on entering the school and some previous underachievement. Consequently, pupils are not prepared well enough for their future education. Pupils in the speech and language unit achieve well. The good ratio of adults to pupils and the good teaching within the unit help ensure that the individual needs of pupils are met well.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles through eating nutritious food and taking plenty of exercise. The school has effective links with the local communities, often through work undertaken by the extended services manager. Although pupils have some opportunities to learn about people and traditions in other countries, their awareness of the variety of faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom and the wider world is only satisfactory.

Teaching has improved over the past year, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6. In these classes, assessment information is used much more effectively to match pupils' work to their capabilities. However, learning in the majority of lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 is still only satisfactory mainly because the small steps which build on pupils' levels of skills and knowledge are not planned carefully enough. Where this occurs, some of the pupils, especially the more able, are not challenged well enough. In some lessons, pupils' learning is slower because too much of the teacher's time is taken managing the behaviour of a minority of pupils.

The curriculum is satisfactory and places correct emphasis on improving pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils from different year groups are often grouped by ability and this helps the teacher plan work that matches the capabilities of most pupils. However, the curriculum does not specify a clear progression of focused learning steps which would help teachers provide additional challenge for pupils, especially the more able.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Although pupils have targets for improvement, in most classes they are not part of pupils' daily learning and, consequently, they have little impact on their progress. The breakfast and after-school clubs give those who participate opportunities to socialise, eat and play with pupils of differing ages and from other classes, enabling them to develop confidence within a safe and calm environment.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders at all levels are committed to improving the school. They are aware that their own skills of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are not yet fully developed. Consequently, their impact on raising standards and achievement is not as great as it could be.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage has improved considerably since the last inspection. It is led and managed well and now provides children with a very positive and enjoyable start to their education. The children are nurtured in a caring and supportive environment. Children are developing into independent learners, enjoying the freedom to explore and investigate while understanding the boundaries and how to keep safe. Teaching is good. Children enjoy a wide choice of activities both inside and out, which motivates and enthuses them. Children's learning is well planned with a clear emphasis each day on oral work and linking sounds and letters, leading to early reading and evidence of emergent writing. Numeracy is well structured, with clear links to other early learning goals, for example using the sand and water trays for learning about space, shape and volume. Assessment systems have improved and now allow the adults to track children's progress and assess their level of attainment much more accurately. Because of the significant improvements in the overall provision, children are now achieving well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of learning by ensuring that the small steps which successfully build upon pupils' levels of skills and knowledge are planned carefully for pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluating skills of all leaders.
- Ensure that the support for pupils with behavioural difficulties does not detract from the learning of other pupils.
- Ensure that pupils' targets for improvement are part of their daily learning.

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

Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has improved, especially in English, and is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. Because of the exceptionally low starting points on entry into the school and some underachievement in recent years, standards at the end of all year groups in Key Stages 1 and 2 remain exceptionally low.

Teachers' assessments show that in 2008 there was a decline in standards at the end of Key Stage 1. Standards were exceptionally low, especially in reading and writing. However, a significant number of pupils in this cohort either started the Early Years Foundation Stage or entered the school in Year 1 or Year 2 with very low levels of skills, particularly in literacy. Currently, most pupils are making satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, and some are achieving well, particularly in writing and mathematics. The unvalidated 2008 end of Key Stage 2 test results show that standards in English had improved considerably since 2007. However, because of instability in the teaching of mathematics in Year 6 caused by staffing changes, standards

in mathematics declined. Staffing in Year 6 is now stable and pupils in this year group are currently making good progress in mathematics.

In most year groups, the more able pupils are not challenged well enough and they do not make as much progress as they could. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory and sometimes good progress, often due to the effective support provided through external agencies, the school's intervention strategies and the good work undertaken in the speech and language unit.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils are friendly and polite, and are usually capable of working together well. Pupils say that the teachers care for them and are confident that the adults would help them should problems occur. Most pupils behave well, but a small number sometimes require close adult support to enable them to control their emotions. Racial incidents are rare and pupils say that bullying is minimal. They enjoy the rewards they get for good work, attending regularly and good behaviour. The 'Young Consultants' are proud of their contributions to decisions made in the school, especially being involved in the purchase of more play equipment. The school uses many strategies to reduce the rate of pupil absence. Consequently, attendance is rising to a level more closely matching the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, teaching and learning have improved. Although the increasing use of assessment information is helping teachers pitch work at the right level for most pupils, the small steps which build upon pupils' skills and knowledge are not planned carefully enough, especially for the more able. Many teachers have developed a wide range of strategies to manage pupils' behaviour in lessons and, in many instances, these are used well. However, in some lessons, the amount of time taken by teachers to manage the few pupils with behavioural difficulties detracts significantly from the learning of the majority. Consequently, the pace of learning in some lessons is too slow.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Since the last inspection, various initiatives have been introduced to develop pupils' language and communication skills in all key stages. The curriculum is enriched well through a variety of visits, including overnight camping. Opportunities for pupils' development of basic skills through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) have improved and computers are now based in most learning areas. However, the use of ICT to promote learning in all subjects is not yet planned well enough. While there is good curriculum support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is little planned curriculum support for more able pupils. There is a wide range of well supported extra-curricular activities including steel pans, choir, chess and the boys' and girls' football teams.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

At the time of the inspection, procedures for ensuring the protection, safety and well-being of pupils were robust. Many parents appreciate the service provided for the community through the breakfast and after-school care clubs. Although behaviour of pupils in some classes and around the school can be disruptive and sometimes interferes with the flow of learning in lessons, it is usually managed well. The system for tracking pupils' progress is increasingly helping leaders and teachers monitor pupils' achievement and target support for those who are not making the expected progress. All pupils have targets to promote their learning. However, they are not effective because the targets are not integrated into day-to-day learning. In some classes, marking provides pupils with good advice on how to improve. However, this is not consistent and in some classes, many pupils cannot read or understand the comments made.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since his appointment, the headteacher has successfully focused the school on raising standards and achievement and has initiated several strategies for improvement. Some of these, particularly in writing, are beginning to have a positive impact. Through improved systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, all leaders now have a clearer understanding of the main areas for improvement. Leaders at all levels are committed to improving the school, but the monitoring and evaluation skills of many of the leaders are not yet developed well enough. Consequently, their impact on school improvement is not as great as it could be. Governors know the school well, are becoming much more involved in the work of the school and are now using their skills much more effectively to hold the school to account for standards and achievement. Community cohesion is only satisfactory because there is not sufficient emphasis on promoting pupils' understanding of the variety of cultures in the United Kingdom and global communities.

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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	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

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	4
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**

12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barley Croft Primary School, Leicester, LE4 0UT

Thank you for making our recent visit to your school such an enjoyable experience. It was a delight to talk to you and to see how happy you are. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your books and talking to you. We were very pleased to find that you know how to keep fit and healthy by taking plenty of exercise and eating your fruit and vegetables. Well done!

We are pleased to find that your school has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The youngest children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make good progress and are looked after well. Many of your parents speak highly of the way the school is part of the community, especially how the teachers are willing to help if there is a problem at home or in school.

Although the teaching is satisfactory, we want it to continue to improve. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that, in all your lessons, the teachers plan carefully the next small steps that will help you learn. Although most of you behave well, there are a few who do not and, in some lessons, this does not help the other pupils to get on with their work. We have asked the headteacher to prevent this and make sure that you learn well without any disruptions.

All the teachers work hard for you and some take on additional responsibilities in the school. We have asked the headteacher to ensure that these teachers become even better at helping you by looking very carefully at how well you learn in lessons and the progress you are making.

All of you have targets which are to help you improve your work. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that your targets guide you even more by making sure that they are an important part of your learning in lessons. You can help too by continuing to work hard, behaving well and doing your very best.

We shall take away many good memories about your school and have very much enjoyed the time we have spent with you. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours faithfully

Roy Bowers

Her Majesty's Inspector