

Belmont Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120401
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327271
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Ann Taylor

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	191
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	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Armstrong
Headteacher	Mrs Maxine Purvis
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Harrowby Lane Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 9LR

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2008
Inspection number	327271

Telephone number
Fax number

01476567939
01476404039

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Smaller than most others, the school takes pupils from the north of Grantham. Numbers joining or leaving the school other than at the normal time are much higher than usual. When they enter the school, pupils' attainment is well below that usually seen for the Reception year, especially in their language development and personal and social skills. Fewer than half of the children have any pre-school experience. The proportion of pupils who find learning difficult is high, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. These difficulties include moderate learning, behavioural, speech, language or communication concerns. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are a very small number of pupils from Eastern Europe but none are at an early stage of English language development. Awards gained by the school include Healthy Schools, National Clean Air, Football Association Charter Mark and Investors in People. The school is part of an Educational Improvement Partnership which provides funding for two learning mentors. It operates its own very popular breakfast club. The privately owned A2A Out of School Club on site was inspected at the same time, with a separate report.

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, which is continually striving to do the very best for its pupils. Parents are highly complimentary about all that the school provides. The leadership and management of the school are good. The strong leadership of the headteacher, working in close partnership with the assistant headteacher, has been the catalyst for the good progress pupils are now making. Since the last inspection, continual hard work has resulted in key initiatives and improvements which are now starting to bear fruit. Results from national tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6 show that pupils made good progress and attained broadly average standards. Current data from the school's meticulous assessment systems show that this good progress is school wide. This is because the teaching is good and inspires pupils to aim high. Lessons really challenge them and very good use of interactive whiteboards makes learning enjoyable. However, sometimes teachers' planning does not show how they will assess how well pupils are acquiring the key skills and knowledge gained during lessons.

Outstanding levels of care and welfare ensure the conditions for learning are right for pupils to do well. The learning mentors work very effectively with families who need extra support. Pupils' personal development is good, and they are well behaved and enjoy school. Activities such as the 'Big Write' in literacy capture both girls' and boys' interests. This is a significant improvement as formerly, younger boys were reluctant writers. The satisfactory curriculum is currently being reviewed and updated. This is because all new initiatives need pulling together and the school has rightly recognised the need for a stronger focus on developing pupils' basic skills. The school has a good understanding of the local community. Given the school's good improvements since the last inspection it is well placed to carry on improving.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start because their learning and development needs are understood clearly. Meticulous assessments measure how much the children can do when they arrive, with thorough ongoing systems which check how well they are progressing. A detailed analysis and interpretation of what the data show allows leaders to identify and work to remedy any areas of weakness. The attention to children's welfare needs is exemplary. For example, the early identification of children with learning difficulties, especially those with possible speech and language delay, is notable. Teaching is good and activities well planned to cover all areas of learning. Some practice from teaching assistants is exemplary, particularly in the ways good behaviour is promoted. This sets a good example and calms children when they are fractious. Children's personal and social development is currently satisfactory as many children often find sitting and listening a challenge and some have difficulties sharing and playing nicely with each other. Staff work hard to overcome this but children's personal and social development, along with their early writing skills, remain at relatively weaker areas by the time they leave the Foundation Stage. This is despite the all round good progress they make. Whilst the outdoor area is an integral part of children's learning, there is scope for even more creative use, especially to help encourage boys' early writing skills.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure lesson planning includes specific strategies for the assessment of skills and learning for all groups of pupils

- Implement plans to revise the curriculum in order to provide explicit opportunities to enhance pupils' basic skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in the Reception class and reach standards which are approaching average by the end of Reception. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 achieve well from their various starting points, reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 2 and 6. Standards have been slowly rising in recent years and reached an all time high in summer 2008. Current data confirms that progress is consistently good, and sometimes exceptional, throughout the school. Targets are suitably challenging. Those for the current Year 6 are being revised further, as expectations are high and pupils are on track to exceed last year's performance. Pupils identified as needing extra help make good progress because of the good teaching and the excellent support for their welfare. The school's careful tracking system confirms the high numbers of pupils who arrive and leave other than at the usual times also make good progress during their time here.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes to learning are good because they appreciate that their teachers have much to offer them. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good because staff have high expectations of them and effectively support their social and moral development. A small minority find it hard to behave well all the time and staff manage the occasional challenging behaviour well so that it does not detract from learning. Pupils feel valued as individuals, and this contributes well to their spiritual development. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school, and attendance is above average overall. Pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of society is developing well because the school provides regular opportunities for the exploration of a range of cultures and beliefs. Discussions with pupils show that they understand well how to ensure their own safety and that of others, and the importance of developing healthy lifestyles. Pupils are prepared to take responsibility; the school has a current priority to develop further opportunities to foster their independence. The school council enables pupils to take a positive role in school life, but is still developing its role. The school gels well as a community because pupils have developed a good sense of social responsibility and are supportive of each other. Pupils become involved with wider community groups, the local Parish Council and Woodland Trust for example. These approaches help them to understand their local community and are preparing them well for their broader role in life as citizens. Their personal development and ability to cooperate as members of a team stand them in good stead for their next stage of education and for their future economic well-being. Pupils' personal development reflects well the message on a banner in the hall proclaiming: 'We are building our school on solid foundations.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils say that learning is enjoyable, and a number of parents and carers confirmed this in their questionnaire responses. Teachers plan lessons carefully and provide a range of tasks to engage pupils actively in learning. Pupils are certainly keen to participate in classes, and their attitudes

to work support their learning well. Consequently, involvement, whether at individual, class or small group level is suitably high. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them well in their work, and there is usually a good pace to the lessons. Where, occasionally, teaching is satisfactory, pupils are slower to settle or respond. Planning is thorough, with clear objectives for learning and work designed to meet the particular needs of the different groups of pupils in each class. A focussed approach to day-to-day strategies for assessing the acquisition of key skills or knowledge within lessons is not yet developed fully across the school. Nevertheless, teachers do use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to probe the extent of knowledge being acquired. Consequently, pupils learn well because they are often asked to explain their thinking and therefore share the individual ways they come to an answer, or solve a problem. Marking is generally good, and summarises pupils' achievements well. There are occasional inconsistencies between teachers and subjects in marking which focuses insufficiently on the next individual steps for improvement. Nevertheless, pupils do know their overall targets and are appreciative of the help their teachers provide. Teaching assistants provide active and valuable individual support for pupils who find learning more difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There is a good range of extra curricular activities and pupils get two opportunities for residential visits away from home. This all helps their personal and social development. There have been many exciting new initiatives such as the business enterprise element, in partnership with a local secondary school. This is starting to help the oldest pupils become more aware of how businesses work. A strong citizenship programme for Year 6 prepares them well for the challenges they may meet when they leave primary school. These, and other initiatives, have yet to be incorporating fully into the curriculum, which is currently being reviewed. The school has also identified that pupils need more speaking and listening opportunities and to practice their basic skills in using information and communications technology, such as in subjects like history and geography. Staff also want to help pupils become more independent in their learning. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well, but not all parents and carers yet ensure healthy eating is reflected in their children's lunch boxes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school pays excellent attention to the welfare of its pupils. Pupils confirm they feel safe in school and that there is always an adult they can turn to in time of trouble or to help them with a personal problem. Hence, pastoral care is of an excellent standard. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust, and links with support agencies ensure pupils are very well supported. Provision for the high numbers of pupils who have a special educational need is outstanding. The very effective monitoring and support systems, established by the special educational needs coordinator and learning mentor, sustain such pupils exceptionally well, and enable them to make good progress. Pupils' sometimes very complex levels of emotional and learning needs often means considerable support is required before their progress accelerates.

Staff are committed to ensuring pupils have the opportunity to excel personally as well as academically. This ensures individual needs are met, and very good half-termly assessment systems enable any potential underachievement to be identified quickly. Intervention strategies to support all groups of pupils, and enable them to work more effectively to meet their potential, are very well considered. The overall monitoring of pupils' progress is very effective and suitably

challenging targets are set to enable them to achieve well. This school indeed lives up to its motto: 'Caring for children, striving for excellence.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and assistant headteacher share a vision for improving standards which is now being firmly translated into reality. The headteacher has the confidence and understanding to research new national initiatives which will best suit the needs of the pupils here. The assistant headteacher plays a major role in helping bring these to fruition. For example, the Big Writing project, only recently started, is already proving its worth both in terms of improving standards and better motivating pupils. With good support from the senior management team, and a very experienced chair of governors, the school is reaping the benefits of years of investment in systems and practices designed to improve the quality of learning and teaching. Detailed observations of lessons, regular examinations of pupils' work and targeted support for weaker areas, together with on-going staff training, are ultimately resulting in improved standards. The school's analysis and interpretation of data about how well children are progressing is sophisticated. It allows senior staff to keep a close overview of standards in the school, and thus ensure that new initiatives are indeed having the desired effect on pupils' learning. Governors have improved their levels of confidence in asking challenging questions, but some are not yet as strong in evaluating what the school is providing. Many subject coordinators are new to their role but have already made a promising start in monitoring their subject and identifying ways to improve.

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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?	3
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

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	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	2

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	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**

23 October 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Belmont Primary School, Harrowby Lane, Grantham NG31 9LR.

Thank you for making me and Mr Miller so welcome when we visited you recently. We enjoyed our two days and thought you were really well behaved, polite and friendly, so well done! I am writing to tell you what we found out.

You go to a good school, and Mrs Purvis and everyone tries really hard to make sure that you do as well as you can. We were most impressed with the way that you are looked after and helped to do your very best, especially if you find learning difficult, or have worries that need sorting out. You are doing well in your English, mathematics and science and reaching levels which most other children of your age reach. This is because the teaching in your school is good. Keep on with the Big Writing and try your best with it, (I know you enjoy it!) because it will really help you.

We have asked Mrs Purvis and all the staff to work on the following things, to make your school even better:

- Plan ways teachers can check how much you are learning in each lesson.
- Update what you are being taught so you have lots of chances to practise and improve your literacy, numeracy, ICT and speaking skills in every lesson.

You can help by carrying on being well behaved and working hard.

We wish you every success for the future,

Mrs A Taylor

Lead inspector