

Birstwith Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121550
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327510
Inspection date	26 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Gill

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	67
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	Mr Harry Eastland
Headteacher	Mrs E Bedford
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wreaks Road Birstwith Harrogate North Yorkshire HG3 2NJ

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	26 January 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the degree of progress made by pupils from their individual starting points; the quality of teaching as a result of some recent changes in staffing; and children's achievements in Reception (Early Years Foundation Stage). Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry, test results, teachers' records, observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' current work and discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This very small primary school serves rural communities to the north-west of Harrogate. Relatively few pupils live in Birstwith itself and a growing number travel some distance to school each day. Pupils are from relatively advantaged social and economic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are of a White British heritage. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school partway through the year is higher than is found normally. The school has experienced a substantial turnover in teachers and teaching assistants since 2006. Currently, building work is taking pace to create new office and kitchen space. The school holds the following awards: Healthy Schools, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Investors in People, Activemark and Football Foundation School Status.

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 with some outstanding features. Despite the changes in staffing, the growing numbers and movement of pupils, the school has maintained and in some cases improved its provision since 2006. Pupils' excellent personal development benefits greatly from the extremely supportive care that they receive. The climate around school is buzzing with community spirit, strong enough to make pupils declare, 'It is not the place or the lessons but it is the people that make this school special.'

Standards are above average and achievement is good. In such a small school pupils' standards in Year 2 and 6 can vary greatly from year to year depending on the make-up of the cohort, including the length of time that they have been in the school. Inspection findings agree with the school's judgement that achievement is good, and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress to that of their peers. This is because the work is broken down into small steps and teaching, ably supported by teaching assistants, is successful in helping them to achieve well.

Progress is often better in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. This is because, in comparison, fewer pupils reach the higher levels in writing. In this respect, higher attaining pupils could do even better in acquiring skills to stand them in good stead later on. Leadership and management are well aware of this relative difference in progress and have begun to implement plans to tackle it, but it is too soon to see their full effect. Academic guidance is good. Pupils are given targets to achieve and the marking of their work points out aspects for improvement. However, some pupils have not fully assimilated this information. As a result, they are not quite clear about what they have to do to reach a high level in writing.

Parents are very pleased with the school, particularly now that the newly improved website is providing them with good information about the curriculum and forthcoming events. This was, until recently, an aspect of concern among some parents. The level of support that the school receives from parents and the degree to which they feel included in this partnership is first-rate. All of this has a powerful impact on pupils' personal development and the good progress that they make. Parents subscribe to the view that, 'This is a well managed school where every child matters.' The first-rate support provided for pupils helps to create very well balanced and confident young people. They know a great deal about keeping healthy, staying safe and contributing to school life, particularly because they are not concerned about bullying, an excellent menu is available at lunchtime and the work of the school council is so well discussed by all pupils.

Teaching is good because it has a generally good effect on pupils' learning, despite the relative improvements needed to raise standards in writing. It engages pupils' interest well in a good curriculum that includes a wide range of well planned activities. Parents and their children both point to the 'fun' elements in the curriculum in which teaching is particularly effective. Themed days focusing on design and technology, for example, promote superb opportunities for pupils to work together and really enjoy their learning. On one occasion, they were asked to collaborate in making a model jitterbug, then design and make a biscuit that their fantasy creature might relish. This stimulating element created great excitement and is obviously one of the reasons why attendance is well above average.

The headteacher and governing body lead with knowledge and enthusiasm. They are committed to excellent care for pupils, with very good effect. The collaboration with other local small

schools has a powerful influence on pupils' academic and personal development. The school meets the current government requirements for safeguarding pupils. Methods of school self-evaluation are good and as a result, everyone knows the quality of the school's work and how well pupils are doing. The school improvement plan contains the right areas for improvement to make the school even more successful, including pupils' writing and their knowledge of targets. Governors visit the school regularly, which allows them to gain a good appreciation of its ethos and pupils' progress.

The school promotes equality and diversity well. Pupils are given good opportunities to relate to groups within and beyond their immediate locality. Sponsorship of children in Africa also gives them a good degree of understanding about global issues. The progress made since the last inspection, including the maintenance of outstanding features, demonstrates a good capacity to continue moving forward and good value for money.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage gives children a good start in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Levels of ability on entry vary considerably from year to year. Most recently, in 2008, attainment was above nationally expected levels by the end of Reception after a broadly typical start. Children make especially good progress in their communication skills and mathematical development, particularly since skills in calculation, for example, are sometimes below expected levels for their age when they first start. Overall, across all areas of learning, progress and achievement are good. Since the last inspection, good provision for Reception-aged children has been maintained, despite a change in leadership. Moreover, arrangements for children's welfare are first-rate. The management of learning whereby pupils in Year 1 share the facilities is good. For example, at any one moment, younger children will be building structures with large boxes or writing a letter to a friend in the play area outside, while older pupils tackle mathematics indoors around the electronic whiteboard. The classroom is a hive of activity in which children experience a wide-ranging and interesting curriculum. Teaching is quick to respond to children's changing interests by, for example, providing relevant and timely opportunities for role play. In response to the stimulating activities, children behave very well and are highly motivated. Currently, provision for continual play outside is restricted by the building work, but this is a temporary and unavoidable shortcoming.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' understanding of how to produce better writing to raise standards and quicken progress, particularly for those capable of reaching above average standards.

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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?	1
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?	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

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	2
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	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**

Inspection of Birstwith Church of England Primary School, Harrogate, HG3 2NJ

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit because everyone was so friendly. You go to a good school, which is outstanding in some respects.

The children that spoke to us during the day were very convinced about the special aspects of school life. Basically, you all feel very happy and safe at Birstwith. Your personal development is first-rate because all the adults care for you so well. The mixing of the age groups that takes place on the themed events gives you all a great sense of sharing and collaboration. Clubs such as dance, Latin or cheerleading add breadth to an already good curriculum. Joining in with other schools in performing arts events brings you into contact with many other children; your links with Africa give this contact a valuable global dimension. Your parents know through first-hand experience at the award assemblies how strong the community spirit is within the school. Play monitors and the school council make sure that this is kept alive on a daily basis. You say that many lessons are full of fun and we agree. Teaching is good in the way that it helps you progress well.

I am suggesting one thing for the school to do to become even better. This is to help you understand exactly how to improve your writing so that standards can be even higher throughout the school. You can all help by making sure that you know exactly what targets you are aiming at, how close you are to reaching them and what you need to do next.

Best wishes to you all and I hope that the new building work meets your approval when it is finished.