

Berkswich CE (VC) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124234
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328085
Inspection date	11 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	220
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	Colin Jones
Headteacher	M Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cedar Way Walton-on-the-Hill Stafford ST17 0LU
Telephone number	01785 354600
Fax number	01785 662181

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how the school is raising standards in writing, especially for boys; how well pupils achieve in Key Stage 1; and the effectiveness of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Evidence was gathered from observations of pupils at work and play, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and school documentation and an analysis of parents' views. 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

In this average size primary school, the majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average, although the number of pupils with a statement of educational need is average. The majority of children start school in the EYFS in the Reception class. However, since September 2007, Nursery provision has been available for 13 children attending on a part-time basis. There are also before- and after-school clubs available on site which are managed by an external provider. The school has gained numerous awards, including full Dyslexia Friendly status, Basic Skills Quality Mark 2 and Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Berkswich is an outstanding school. The vast majority of parents and pupils hold their school in very high regard, and their extremely positive views are entirely justified. One parent summed up the views of many when writing, 'This is an excellent school which has an exceptional family atmosphere.' Every child is important and valued and the care, guidance and support they receive are outstanding. This results in pupils who attain extremely well academically and who become mature, responsible and well-mannered young people.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is excellent; they have positive attitudes and enjoy their learning, as demonstrated by their well above average attendance. In a secure and very happy environment, all necessary safeguarding procedures are fully in place, and pupils greatly enjoy all aspects of school life. Those spoken to say, 'We love it here. Learning is fun, our teachers are kind and in fact there is nothing we would want to change.' Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. In many lessons, pupils are encouraged to reflect on how they would feel in different situations and they respond very sensibly and maturely to these opportunities. Their understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, the part that food plays in their growth and development and the importance of exercise is excellent. They feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say there is very little bullying and if 'falling-outs' do occur, they are sorted out swiftly and fairly. Pupils readily take on responsibilities and play an active part in community activities. They are proud to be school councillors, members of the eco-council or peer mediators, recognising the value of helping others. Although their contribution to and understanding of the importance of the school, local and world communities are very good, they are less well informed about the differences within community life in Britain today. From broadly average starting points, pupils achieve exceptionally well, so that by the time they leave in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are significantly above the national average. Achievement overall is outstanding. Although over the last two years, standards at the end of Year 2 have been broadly average, an analysis of performance data shows that in reading, writing and mathematics, progress has been good. However, through a careful analysis of assessment information, the leadership team has identified that boys throughout the school do not progress as well as girls in writing. Immediate action has been taken and a variety of strategies have been implemented to rectify this. These strategies include a strong emphasis on the teaching of the names of letters and their sounds in the EYFS and in Years 1 and 2, and ensuring pupils have a real purpose for their writing, for example through visits to the theatre and the Forestry Exhibition. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), music and photographs to motivate and inspire pupils is another strategy being developed. These were used most effectively in Year 6, as pupils listened to music and looked at photographs of homeless people. After listening to the music and reflecting on what it must be like to be homeless, one pupil spontaneously commented, 'That was really powerful.' Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and achieve extremely well. The skills and confidence that pupils develop ensure that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and for the future. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding throughout the school. Teachers make clear what they are trying to achieve in lessons through careful planning, which ensures that pupils' needs are met. Teaching assistants play an active role and support pupils' learning well. Marking is regular and clearly shows what pupils need to do to improve. Academic guidance is very good. Pupils' progress is tracked closely and pupils are very clear about how to achieve the targets set for them. The

good curriculum provides an excellent balance between creative, physical and academic work. A particular strength is the way in which different subjects are linked together to motivate and engage pupils and to give them extensive opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy and ICT skills. However, the school is aware that although improving, the writing curriculum has not always been appropriate for the needs of boys.

The driving force behind the school's success is the very high quality of leadership at all levels. In particular, the headteacher, supported by the deputy, gives outstanding direction for the work of the school. Excellent support is received from the committed and highly professional staff and governors. Together they ensure that this is not a school that rests on its laurels, and they are constantly looking for ways to improve even more. Self-evaluation is clear, accurate and honest, which results in the school having an excellent knowledge of what it does well and what could be improved. For example, the leadership team knows that the strong commitment to promoting cohesion within the school, local and global communities must be extended into developing pupils' understanding of diversity of life in multicultural Britain. The way in which the school has maintained the high academic standards identified in the previous inspection whilst providing pupils with an extremely broad, well-rounded education is a clear indication of its outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good. On entry to the school in Reception, the majority of children have skills that match those expected for their age. Those children who have attended the part-time Nursery make swifter progress initially. However, by the time they enter Year 1, all children have made good gains in all areas of learning and are attaining standards that are slightly above average. Boys do not attain as highly as girls in writing, and their social development is a relatively weaker aspect of children's learning. Children enjoy school and settle quickly in this warm, welcoming and happy setting. Behaviour is good and children clearly enjoy their work. One parent typically said, 'My child has settled in very well and cannot wait each day to go to school.' Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants and this contributes to good teaching and learning. All staff know the children very well and regular assessment is used effectively in planning to meet individual children's needs. All welfare requirements are very securely in place. Children enjoy the wide range of stimulating activities prepared for them. Staff place a good emphasis on activities that allow children to explore and investigate, and these are balanced with carefully chosen activities led by adults. However, the use of the outdoor area is not sufficiently developed for supporting learning in all areas of the EYFS curriculum. The new EYFS leader is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and a good action plan is in place to improve it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of the recently introduced strategies to ensure boys progress as well as girls in writing.
- Develop pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in multicultural Britain today.

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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?	1
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	1

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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Berskwich Church of England Primary School, Stafford ST17 0LU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and listening to what you had to say. We know you really like your school and enjoy the many activities your teachers offer you. We agree with you when you say yours is an outstanding school. We know many of your parents and carers agree with what you say. These are the main things we found out when we visited you.

- By Year 6, you attain standards in English, mathematics and science that are much higher than those that are found in most schools. This means you are well prepared for your next school.
- We know you really enjoy your work and many of you who spoke to us said that learning was fun.
- It is good to know you are very happy with the way teachers look after you and care for you, and we think they do this very well.
- We were very impressed about the way you could advise us about eating healthily and the importance of taking regular exercise.
- Your behaviour is excellent and your parents and carers should be very proud of the way you are so polite and welcoming to visitors.
- You are taught exceptionally well and your teachers work hard to make sure that your lessons are interesting and that you make excellent progress.
- The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well and the staff and governors work well together making a very effective team.

To help the school stay as good and successful as it is, we have suggested the following:

- your teachers should continue to find interesting ways of encouraging you to write. We think this is especially important for the boys, as sometimes you do not progress as well as the girls in this subject
- although you make a strong contribution to the school, local and global communities, we think that you need to have more opportunities to learn about the different communities in Britain today

Thank you again for welcoming us into your school and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Lois Furness

Lead inspector