

Birchwood Grove Community Primary School, Burgess Hill

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125944
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	328426
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Burghart

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)	331
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	50
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Osbourn
Headteacher	Catrin Mari Jones
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Birchwood Grove Road Burgess Hill RH15 0DP
Telephone number	01444 242209
Fax number	01444 230042

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	22–23 October 2008
Inspection number	328426

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average size primary school. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is very small and none is in the first stages of learning the language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Children start school aged four in one of the two Reception classes. These form part of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision.

A new school building is currently being constructed on site to be ready for September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school successfully meets its aims to enable pupils to reach high standards and develop as sensible, caring young people. Pastoral and physical care are strong. Excellent relationships and good quality planning effectively support pupils' personal development. This is a happy school where pupils are successfully encouraged to be healthy and feel safe. Behaviour and attendance are outstanding. Pupils are well prepared for future study and helped to understand how they can play their part in community life. Pupils are keen to say how much they enjoy school, especially the excellent range and number of extra-curricular opportunities. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. 'I have no hesitation in recommending Birchwood to anyone!' was a typical comment.

When they start school, most children have skills which are better than are usually expected of this age. Because provision is good, children make good progress in the EYFS and achieve standards that are above average when they join Year 1. Progress is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 with notably good features in improvements in writing. Standards are above average at the end of Year 2 and this forms the basis of good progress in Years 3 to 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 are well above average in English, mathematics and science. The school is good at including all pupils in all activities. Support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the few whose first language is not English, is well managed and leads to good progress.

Pupils achieve well because the curriculum is well planned to be broad, relevant and enjoyable. For most of the time, it is well delivered. Teaching is good with strengths in how staff question pupils and make learning objectives clear. Expectations are high and pupils are usually well challenged. However, on the few occasions when work does not challenge pupils fully, this limits their progress. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment information to set targets and raise pupils' awareness of what pupils are capable of. Nevertheless, academic guidance is effective in supporting good progress. Teachers' marking does not always make it clear how pupils can improve.

Good leadership and management at all levels ensure the school is well run. All staff successfully contribute to school development and there is a strong ethic of teamwork. Self-evaluation is effective in bringing about change. Staff and governors have a good understanding of strengths and areas for further development, despite some lack of confidence in declaring formally what the school is good at. The school's positive track record and the good quality of planning and practice already in place are firmly based on rigorous monitoring. Governance is good. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors set high expectations and are careful to evaluate the impact of decisions taken on pupils' learning. Even if Birchwood was not to move into a new building, it would still have a good capacity to develop!

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are given a good start that builds on what they can already do when they first arrive. They are particularly well cared for and usually well taught. They respond with excellent behaviour and enthusiasm. Parents are extremely pleased with the way young children are introduced to school life. Children make good progress to reach standards that are above national expectations at the end of the EYFS overall. Personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. Children are very happy to work and play together, showing that they can share

and be considerate. Children are emerging as readers and writers and are given a good basis for mathematics in activities such as counting and sorting by size, shape and colour. Children start school with aspects of their creative development below what is expected. They make satisfactory progress in this area of learning. But, as this is comparatively less successful than other aspects, it remains a point for further development which the school is already aware of. The EYFS is well led and there is evidence of considerable improvements in planning for learning through a mix of play and teacher-directed activities. Copious assessment and recording of children's performance mean staff know children well. Good use of resources and the outside area (despite the constraints of the building site) effectively support children's learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more effective use of assessment information to set targets to show pupils how they can gauge their own progress.
- Build on existing good practice in teaching to improve the effectiveness of marking and ensure that pupils are always fully challenged.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from the start of Reception to the end of Year 6. They successfully build on their good achievements in the EYFS, making steady progress in Key Stage 1 to reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Good progress in Years 3 to 6 results in standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above average when pupils leave the school. This is a particular success story in terms of writing. This was previously identified by the school as a relative weakness and became a central focus for improvement. Current writing standards are significantly better than the national average, with a high proportion of pupils reaching above average levels. Very good basic literacy and numeracy skills form a strong basis for work across the curriculum. Because teaching and support are good, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few who speak English as an additional language make at least as good progress as others of similar ages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' attitudes towards school are very positive. It is obvious that pupils enjoy being at Birchwood Grove. Their behaviour is exemplary and attendance is high. Outstanding relationships make a particularly good contribution to learning with pupils growing in confidence, knowing that their views and feelings matter. School councillors speak for pupils in general when they say they feel safe at school and are encouraged to take on responsibility. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school and local community through acting as monitors and in fund raising. They know how to stay healthy and keep fit and are keen to be involved in eco-friendly initiatives, such as recycling and energy saving. With above average basic and problem-solving skills and a very strong aptitude for working together, pupils are well prepared for future study and life in general. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with considerable strength in pupils' understanding of right and wrong and well developed social skills. Spiritual development is good, for example in terms of appreciation of colour, music and nature. A lack of opportunities to be involved in reflection during daily acts of collective worship has a restricting effect. Cultural development is good overall because of work on different

customs and lifestyles. Pupils' multicultural awareness, although satisfactory, is a relative weakness which the school is working to overcome.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There are many examples of good teaching across the school with strengths in relationships, clear planning, carefully considered learning objectives, and an enthusiasm for making work interesting. Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants and, together, they manage children and learning opportunities well. The small minority of parents who have concerns over class sizes and mixed-age groups can be reassured that pupils are effectively taught. Well above average standards consistently achieved at the end of Year 6 and pupils' good personal development are testaments to the overall good quality of provision. Relative weaknesses in teaching, which affect only a minority of lessons, feature a lack of pace when pupils, particularly the more able, are not challenged enough. This is more often the case (but not exclusively so) when pupils are taught other than by their own class teachers. Across the school, whilst there are some good examples, teachers' marking does not consistently give pupils enough support in showing how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum on offer is not simply broad, balanced and statutory. It is interesting, well planned, well resourced and frequently evaluated in order to make meaningful changes. Excellent extra-curricular activities enrich and extend learning opportunities, for example in sport, music, science, information and communication technology, and the introduction of French in Years 5 and 6. There is an impressive and very popular range and number of before and after school clubs, visits and visitors. A good programme for social, health and citizenship education pays dividends in terms of outcomes in pupils' personal development. Work is planned for different age groups to ensure that themes and skills are not revisited unnecessarily. However, variations between classes in the way the needs of individual pupils are targeted have sometimes restricted pupils' progress. This makes the difference between this good curriculum and what could be outstanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school lives up to its aims to provide a secure and safe, stimulating learning environment and is true to its intentions to consider pupils' personal development. Pastoral and physical care is a strength of the school. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective, an excellent example being in the way the school continues to function and pupils remain safe during the considerable disruption of the building works. School assessment procedures are well established. Pupils' performance is well documented. Academic guidance, whilst good in terms of encouraging pupils, does not go far enough in showing pupils how they can improve their work. There is good practice in the process of setting targets for writing in Years 3 to 6, but sometimes the lack of clear individual targets in other subjects means there are missed opportunities to draw pupils into the process of gauging their own progress. An example of the negative effect of this is that over the last three years pupils in Years 1 and 2 without clear individual targets

made less obvious progress than pupils in Years 3 to 6. The school has plans in hand to address this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has clear educational direction because it is well led and managed by the headteacher, governors and senior leaders. Middle managers play an effective part in management, successfully contributing to the school's development through their action plans developed for each subject and phase of the school. Under the headteacher's skilful leadership, the staff make a very good team. Despite being too self-effacing and having a tendency to be too cautious, the school's self-evaluation is effective in maintaining an impetus towards improvements. There is a healthy culture of 'let's see how we can do even better' which is securely based on monitoring. A fine example is in the way the quality of pupils' writing has been improved because of careful analysis. Governance is good, with governors well informed and prepared to be constructively critical as well as supportive. The deployment of staff and the use of resources are carefully considered to make the best use of finance. Governors' contribution to the development of the new school building is outstanding. Staff and governors have developed strong links with outside agencies and parents, and these underpin the school's good contribution to community cohesion.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	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?	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	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	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?	2

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**

24 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birchwood Grove Community Primary School, Burgess Hill RH15 0DP

Thank you for your warm welcome during the inspection. You are obviously proud of your school, and so you should be, for it is a good school. It is not surprising that you are happy and that you feel that you can trust your teachers and their assistants. We were particularly impressed by your excellent behaviour and how well you get on with each other and the staff.

Here are some of the highlights:

- You are well taught and this helps you to make good progress and reach standards that are well above average by the time you leave.
- You get off to a good start in Reception.
- You are growing up as sensible and responsible young people.
- The school has an excellent range and number of clubs and activities.
- Staff take good care of you and make sure that you are safe in school.
- Your attendance is outstanding (that means well above most other schools!).

The school is well run. The headteacher, staff and governors make a very good team. They know what is going well and have worked out what the school needs to do to be even better. We have asked them to concentrate on the following things:

- Make more use of what the staff know about how well you are doing to set targets for what you need to do next.
- Ensure that you always have work that is just right for your ability and that, when teachers mark your work, they show you how it could be better.

You can help by continuing to work hard. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart Lead inspector