

Athersley South Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131160
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	328557
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ralph Higgs

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	296
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	Mrs K Bostwick
Headteacher	Mr S Iredale
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wakefield Road Smithies Barnsley South Yorkshire S71 3TP
Telephone number	01226 284223
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average primary school serves an urban area which has high levels of social disadvantage. A much greater proportion of its pupils are eligible for free school meals than is normally the case in other primary schools. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, in recent years, a small but growing number of migrants and refugees, mainly from Eastern Europe, have joined the school. A number of children are from Traveller families. Nonetheless, most pupils enter the school in the first year of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is above average. The school holds a number of awards including the Activemark, the Healthy Schools' Award, and QiSS national recognition for the work it does in study support.

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 and improving school which has several outstanding features. The headteacher, governing body and staff are pulling together strongly to raise pupils' achievement and to enhance provision. The care, guidance and support provided for pupils is outstanding and is very effective in helping them overcome barriers to learning. Good, interesting teaching and high levels of individual attention produce good learning. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. This is recognised by parents who highly value what the school offers. They typically thank the staff for providing an education 'second to none'.

Standards have been rising since the last inspection and are broadly average, although few pupils reach above average levels. This is reflected in the 2008 provisional Key Stage 2 tests, which were the school's best ever set of results. The percentages of pupils reaching Level 4 in English, mathematics and science were in line with the previous national averages. However, much lower proportions of pupils reached Level 5 in English and mathematics than is typically the case nationally. Nonetheless, this represents good achievement from pupils' generally well below average starting points, especially in their language and communication skills, when they start school. This is due to the good quality, effective provision in the EYFS and in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school has worked hard to improve standards of literacy and has been successful in making rapid progress at Key Stage 2. However, pupils' writing standards are much lower than their reading standards by the end of Key Stage 1.

Teachers assess pupils' progress frequently and usually adapt their lesson planning successfully to provide pupils with greater challenge or extra help. Senior leaders monitor this assessment information rigorously. They make strenuous efforts to ensure that any individuals or groups not meeting their targets get effective support. They organise the curriculum well; it has a strong focus on basic skills and is carefully tailored to meet pupils' diverse needs. Teachers are enthusiastic about learning and work effectively in teams to provide pupils with engaging experiences.

As a result, pupils enjoy school a great deal. 'It's perfect!' older pupils unanimously agreed. Pupils feel very safe and secure at school because of the excellent attention to their welfare paid by all staff. They respond very well to the positive ethos for learning which pervades all aspects of the school community. Their behaviour is good; they understand the importance of good attendance, and the overwhelming majority come to school regularly and on time. Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles, 'because that's what school's about', they confided. Pupils develop a strong commitment to their school and local community as they are well prepared to take on their responsibilities as citizens. However, their knowledge of the diverse nature of UK and of global communities is less well developed.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding strategic leadership in partnership with an experienced and effective governing body.

Teachers and support staff are highly motivated and they work together very productively. The school robustly evaluates its provision which enables it to plan effectively for future developments. Consequently, it has a good capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to school in the EYFS. Their standards on entry to the Nursery are, typically, well below the expectations for their age. Vibrant, well planned learning opportunities and good teaching bring about good progress across all areas of learning. Assessment is a regular part of the daily routine and used well to adjust the activities on offer. This results in the majority of children working towards, and some attaining, the expected standards by the time they enter Year 1. Staff plan a good balance of activities to help children become independent learners and to form constructive relationships. Consequently, children's personal and social skills develop well. Extensive use of the excellently resourced outdoor area encourages progress across all areas of learning through adventurous and practical activities. However, sometimes, opportunities for learning new vocabulary and practising emerging writing skills are missed. Children are safe and settled as their welfare is an extremely high priority for staff. They happily work within the three 'golden rules' which help them to understand how to be kind, and to work and play happily together. They follow school routines sensibly and quickly develop a sense of responsibility. The EYFS is led and managed well so that all members of the team can effectively contribute their expertise. Thoughtfully planned provision enables children to transfer successfully into Year 1. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress and they are encouraged to support their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportions of pupils reaching above average standards by the end of Key Stage 2, especially in English and mathematics.
- Raise standards in writing by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Give greater emphasis in the curriculum to increasing pupils' understanding of the diversity of communities elsewhere in the UK and in other parts of the world.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Despite minor fluctuations, results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have been rising across all three core subjects. Marked differences which previously existed between the results of boys and girls and between standards in reading and writing have been largely overcome by the end of Year 6. In contrast, the outcomes of teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 have increased modestly. By the end of Year 2, standards are below average but show improvements in reading and mathematics due to the success of recent initiatives. However, despite the hard work of the school, the gap between pupils' reading and writing skills is much wider than the national average. The school set challenging targets for the Year 6 pupils to achieve in 2008. Inspection evidence indicates that these were exceeded. There are robust systems for assessing pupils' attainment, and the tracking of pupils' progress has a very high priority among teachers and senior leaders. The school has now set its sights even higher for future performance, particularly in respect of the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. They make good progress from their individual starting points in response to the well directed and specific support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. They acquire a very strong sense of moral and social responsibility as this is encouraged from their early years. As a result, pupils gladly take on roles of responsibility and care a great deal for each other's welfare and that of people in the local community. The activities of the school council and the eco committee clearly show pupils' commitment to working together for the benefit of all. Across the school, pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem and work well together in different groupings. They are keen to learn and are attentive in class. They take part enthusiastically in the many activities provided outside of lessons. Their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils confirm that incidents related to bullying or racism are very rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively if they occur. Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of fitness and how to keep safe. They make good progress in their basic skills and experience a satisfactory and increasing range of opportunities to develop their wider economic understanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding and ensures that pupils learn well in all areas of the school. Classrooms are attractive and well organised. Teaching is based on very good planning and is well informed and accurate. Working relationships throughout the school are warm and supportive instilling confidence in the pupils and encouraging them to want to learn. A great deal of effort is made to make learning fun and to involve pupils. Good emphasis is placed on helping pupils develop skills in speaking and listening to deepen their learning. Teachers know their pupils well. They typically pitch tasks at the right level to help all pupils make good progress. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed to stretch pupils further. Teaching assistants make an important contribution to lessons; they support and lead the learning of individuals and small groups well. Pupils use their 'target cards' to know how well they are doing and receive good guidance on how to do better through good quality marking and feedback. However, because some assessment strategies are relatively new, there is a degree of inconsistency in the ways that teachers involve pupils in assessing and evaluating their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is relevant to pupils' needs and promotes positive attitudes to learning. Provision for literacy and numeracy is constantly reviewed to ensure that it is effective. Pupils have good access to computers, which figure frequently in their learning. There is a good emphasis on providing systematically for pupils' personal development. Creative links are made between subjects to help pupils strengthen their understanding. Regular and increasing opportunities to learn outside of the classroom provide practical experiences for pupils to build upon. This helps make learning easier and more pleasurable. An extensive programme of enrichment activities and clubs outside normal lessons adds significantly to pupils' learning and enjoyment. However, the opportunities for pupils to learn about the diverse nature of communities at home and abroad are too narrow.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils are nurtured exceptionally well. There are real strengths in the care and support that the school provides for vulnerable pupils, for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those at an early stage of learning English. The school is highly effective in identifying individual pupils' specific needs and ensuring that productive support is put in place. The school's excellent working relationships with outside agencies contribute significantly to positive outcomes for pupils and their families. The school strives hard to encourage good attendance and it works closely with parents to overcome absence issues. Robust systems that fully meet external requirements are in place for the safeguarding of pupils. The academic guidance given to pupils is good. The setting and reviewing of learning targets is a regular feature of teachers' work with pupils and contributes well to their good overall progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership of the school is reflective and outward looking and takes good account of the views of pupils, parents, other stakeholders and good practice elsewhere. Good systems of performance management and well focused training are increasing the capacity of staff at all levels to contribute effectively to school improvement. The relatively new teams which have been established to lead phase and subject improvement are finding their feet well. However, they have not had time yet to fully impact on raising standards or achievement. Financial management is a strength and enables the school to provide good levels of staffing and resources to meet pupils' different needs. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good overall. Governors know their community very well and play an influential part in helping the school work productively with different groups such as the locality well-being partnership. The school itself is a strong community with a tangible sense of pride in its achievements. The school benefits enormously from the excellent links it has established with other schools and external agencies. For example, the excellent development of outdoor learning in the EYFS has been realised through a close partnership with agencies such as the local authority and 'Groundworks'.

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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?	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?	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

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 Athersley South Primary School, Barnsley, S71 3TP

Thank you for the warm, friendly welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed the discussions we had with you and the visits we made to your lessons. We found that your school provides you with a good standard of education and that some things it does are excellent.

We noticed straight away that you really enjoy school. Many pupils told us that they couldn't think of anything they would change! We saw for ourselves that lessons are interesting and the enthusiasm that you and your teachers bring to learning. You behave well and work hard in lessons, so it was no surprise that you make good progress in your work. The youngest children make a good start to their time in school, although we had to get our feet muddy to find this out because of all the learning they do outdoors. We agree with you that the school provides lots of useful and interesting things to do in class and outside normal lessons. We were very impressed by the excellent care and support the school gives you. You know your targets and your teachers give you good advice to help you to do better.

You are happy and safe at school because staff look out really well for you and you are also very helpful to one another. We were pleased to see that you are trying very hard to keep up your attendance because you know how important that is. You also know how to keep healthy and stay fit judging by the healthy choices you make at lunchtime and your energetic playtime activities.

The headteacher, staff and governors are working successfully to improve your education. However, we have asked them to do some things even better, and I know you will do your best to help them. We want your teachers to help you reach higher standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. As part of this, we want them to help you improve your writing, especially in Years 1 and 2. You are already doing well in your reading so I know you can do this as well. We have also asked them to give you more opportunities to find out about different people and places elsewhere in Britain and in the world.