

Arbourthorne Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133994
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	328797
Inspection date	17 September 2008
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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	434
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 A Twomey
Headteacher	Ms Vanessa Langley
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	Eastern Avenue Sheffield S2 2GQ
Telephone number	0114 239 8163

Age group	3–11
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Inspection number	328797

Fax number

0114 264 2716

Age group	3-11
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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: pupils' achievement in relation to the pattern of standards at the end of Year 6; the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage; and the school's evaluation of initiatives to raise standards. Evidence was gathered from the school's judgements about attainment on entry, test results, teachers' records, observations of teaching, pupils' current work and discussions with senior managers, 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 is a large primary school situated in an area of considerable economic disadvantage. The majority of pupils are of White British origin: the others are from a variety of backgrounds mainly mixed White and Black Caribbean. Very few pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. An above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and more than is usually found has a statement of special educational need. This is partly because the school possesses a Primary Integrated Resource Unit for pupils with significant and complex learning difficulties from across Sheffield. A small group of children is looked after in public care. Pupils enter and leave school during the year in greater numbers than is found nationally. The new headteacher joined the school in September 2008. The school has a number of awards including Leading Practice School, Leading Parent Partnership Award (outstanding), Artsmark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy School Award and Activemark. There is a privately run after-school provision on site but this was inspected separately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Arbourthorne is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils display first-rate personal qualities because they are so very well cared for by the entire staff. The infectious atmosphere throughout school is full of energy, fun and purpose. Pupils, parents and staff all comment on how they feel part of a forward looking and successful school community. Some parents notice how their children have blossomed since being transferred to the school. Others add that children are, 'Absolutely thrilled to be part of something important.'

As a result standards across the school are rising faster than they are nationally. Standards in Year 6 are below the expected level for pupils' age, but the school is having a marked effect on closing gaps in learning, so achievement is good. This is demonstrated by the last published results for Year 6 in 2007. Whilst pupils achieved well overall and outstandingly in science, their progress throughout the school is more uniformly quicker in English than it is in mathematics. Leavers' progress was good in 2008 despite several pupils falling short of their ambitious targets. Importantly, improvements in learning are taking place on a broader front. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make good progress and in 2008 standards at the end of Year 2 were considerably higher than any attained since 2005. These advances represent good progress since the school's previous inspection.

Teaching is skilful at devising work to suit pupils' particular needs, which makes learning relevant and enjoyable. Teaching is good generally although slightly more successful in reading and writing than in mathematics. In reading and writing, teachers are very confident at communicating their intentions, teaching about letters and their sounds and helping pupils to reflect on their learning. For example, in some highly successful lessons in Years 5 and 6, pupils were inspired to talk about their writing in very thoughtful ways. In one case, they showed mature understanding of empathy in writing and, in the other, they used clever combinations of adjectives, nouns and verbs to describe natural materials found in the park. Learning in mathematics is not quite so successful partly because teaching, in some lessons, provides too few opportunities to get pupils to talk about their ideas and what they are finding difficult.

Pupils' outstanding personal development is apparent through their social confidence, care for one another and lively attitudes to learning. They feel safe and extremely well cared for, which has repercussions for learning. As parents commented, 'Rewards for good behaviour spur my child on to work well in school.' Pupils have an extensive knowledge about health and safety and delight in participating in, for example, the school council and peer mediation. Moreover, the school's excellent links with parents helps pupils to behave and learn well. Pupils obtain confidence from the curriculum because it is planned well to meet the needs of a wide range of potentially vulnerable learners. Pupils who benefit in particular are those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those in care and those who arrive partway through the year. Parents are justified in praising the provision for complex difficulties. Some pupils state how much they like it when pupils from the Resource Unit join them in lessons.

The school equips pupils well for life beyond school. The skills they acquire in team work, thinking of others and finding about people's lives and jobs are most valuable. Children in Reception sponsor a four-year-old in South Africa and older pupils have links with a school in Ghana. These activities help them to relate to global issues. The many clubs available, day trips, residential and rigorous contact with parents have raised attendance to broadly average levels.

Good leadership and management lie behind recent improvements. The wealth of information collected for self-evaluation purposes is used well to make new school plans and adjust learning. The headteacher has fitted in immediately so that recent initiatives are being continued in a seamless and advantageous way. Moreover, the headteacher and governors have a clear idea about refinements necessary. All of these positive aspects denote a good capacity for further development, providing the monitoring of teaching and learning is more sharply focussed. This is a relative weakness and one that limits the discussions about why some subjects are progressing faster than others.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but in personal development their achievement is excellent, largely owing to the very positive relationships within the setting and the superb links between home and school. Levels of attainment are well below national expectations when children enter the Nursery. Regard for children's welfare is first-rate because the staff possesses a strong knowledge of the children and their families. By the time they leave Reception, children's skills are below expected levels except in personal development where they reach national expectations. Learning is good because teaching provides a very well balanced set of activities using well chosen resources. Moreover, staff make useful assessments of learning to help them devise new tasks that match children's needs. Outdoors learning is always available and children love the contrast between quiet stories inside, for example, and creating waterfalls outside. Children use the ideas they have learnt with staff well when playing alone or in groups. For example, one child counted up to sixteen successfully and then proceeded to judge the length of their string in comparison with the string of a friend. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed in a way that has quickly recognised what is successful and what needs to be improved. The setting was without a leader for two years and minor aspects of learning need to be consolidated.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics to at least match that in reading and writing.
- Refine the system for evaluating teaching and learning to focus more on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and their ability to communicate verbally in mathematics lessons.

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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?	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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 Arbourthorne Community Primary School, Sheffield, S2 2GQ

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. My colleague and I thoroughly enjoyed our day with you. Even during our initial tour of the school in the morning, we learnt about some very special things such as the Integrated Resource Unit and the efforts made to help you all take part in school life.

You go to a good school, which is improving fast. Some things are excellent such as your personal development and the way you are cared for and supported. I found it fascinating to talk to many of you about your work and what you enjoy most. You certainly have a healthy attitude, feel safe from bullying and take part in school activities with enthusiasm. What impressed me greatly was how positive you all are about what is on offer at Arbourthorne such as sport, residential trips, information and communication technology, film-making and the annual presentation of a Shakespeare play. Getting involved in the school council and helping others through peer mediation makes sure that you learn valuable skills for the future. Many of you take pleasure in the idea of rewards for completed homework, attendance and behaviour. This, you say, gives school an added interest, which helps you learn more quickly.

You say that teaching is good and it helps you to learn well and I agree. You do your best by behaving thoughtfully and keeping positive. You are all growing up to be caring young people who participate very well and are concerned about the world around you. The school's links with Africa give you great opportunities in this respect.

I know everyone wants to do even better and I have asked your school to do two things to help. Your headteacher needs to make sure that your progress in mathematics is as fast as it is in reading and writing. Secondly, she and the staff need to check that you are all getting on as well as you can by studying the progress you are making more closely, and the way you explain your ideas in lessons.

You can all help the school do better by talking about your learning in mathematics as well as you do in some other lessons.