

Bare Trees Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135258
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	329065
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Bardon

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)	540
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 Brian Hurst
Headteacher	Mr John Tobin
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Holly Grove Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 0DX
Telephone number	0161 770 5383
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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

Bare Trees Primary opened as a new school in January 2008 following the amalgamation of two smaller schools, one infant and one junior. It serves a disadvantaged area on the outskirts of the town. A large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, predominantly Bangladeshi. Most of these pupils speak English as an additional language and approaching 10% are at an early stage in learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average although the number with a statement of special educational needs is relatively low. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is made up of a Nursery and two Reception classes. The school has achieved the national Activemark award for sport and is working towards the Healthy Schools and Artsmark awards. A breakfast club is available to pupils and there are family learning classes for parents. A children's centre opened on site in 2008 but this did not form part of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The amalgamation of the two schools has been managed extremely well and Bare Trees Primary has quickly become a good school. There is little to show that the infants and juniors were ever separate and the sense of unity among staff and pupils is strong. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the education their children receive, describing the school as 'well run' with 'good teachers' who are 'welcoming, helpful and caring'. Pupils are equally positive, telling inspectors, 'We learn loads in all lessons.'

As a result of the good teaching they receive and their very positive attitudes to learning, pupils achieve well. Pupils' progress is good overall, but a little uneven. Key Stage 1 has experienced the most disruption and provision in this Key Stage is not yet as effective as in the rest of the school. Consequently, while pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory and showing signs of improvement, standards in Year 2 are below the national average. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. Standards rise and by Year 6 are around the national average, with achievement in English particularly good.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They grow into sociable, articulate and self-assured young people who value education and take considerable pride in all that they are able to achieve. They enjoy school thoroughly and participate enthusiastically in the many interesting activities staff provide, both in and out of lessons. Pupils of all ages behave extremely well. Relationships between pupils and staff and between the pupils themselves are excellent. Year 2 pupils remark how kind and helpful they find the older ones. All these things make for a happy, lively school where everyone feels valued. Most pupils exercise regularly, appreciate the need to eat healthily and know how to keep themselves safe inside and outside school. They readily help around school and raise funds for charity. Pupils acquire an excellent range of basic skills and personal qualities that prepare them very well for what life may bring in the future.

Thorough preparation ensures that lessons run smoothly and that pupils learn at a good pace. Teachers often employ a range of well-chosen strategies, including effective use of information and communication technology (ICT), to aid pupils' understanding and stimulate their interest. Pupils respond well by concentrating hard and trying their best to produce work of a good standard. Teachers share objectives with pupils at the start of each lesson so that everyone is aware of what they are going to be doing. However, many of these objectives are too broad and do not make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn or how to judge how well they are achieving. The colourful curriculum provides pupils with wide-ranging and varied experiences which do much for their enthusiasm for learning. Frequent visits and visitors, regular participation in activities outside school and an excellent range of out-of-school clubs add much to pupils' lives and experiences.

The quality of personal care pupils receive is excellent. Staff keep a careful watch over them and make excellent use of outside agencies to provide the additional support some pupils need. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language receive sensitive and well-considered support and are included fully in the life of the school. Systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress provide useful information which is increasing in detail as teachers refine and improve the strategies they employ.

With the vision of the experienced headteacher as the driving force, the dedication and effective teamwork of the school's senior leaders provides an excellent model for staff and pupils alike. Their enthusiasm permeates the whole school and at all levels staff with management responsibilities carry out their work conscientiously. The school's capacity to improve in the future is good. Managers check the school's work regularly but do not always use sufficiently clear performance measures when judging its effectiveness or evaluating the effects of provision on pupils' achievements. Community cohesion is promoted well and the school responds thoughtfully and effectively to the diverse needs of the community it serves.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to Nursery is well below national expectations. Children are taught well and make good progress. By the time they leave Reception their attainment in some areas meets local levels but is below national averages, particularly where language plays a key part. Children's personal development is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy coming to the school and become confident individuals who work and play happily in the company of others. Children are encouraged to socialise at every opportunity, with staff sensitively intervening to support and enhance conversations. However, at the beginning of the day children are sitting too long at registration. Self-registration has been introduced but does not yet provide a consistently smooth start to each session. Support for children who speak English as an additional language is very effective. By translating into mother tongue, staff provide the best possible level of understanding for these children. Lessons are generally well planned, take account of children's different abilities and provide activities which excite and motivate. Occasionally, children are not allowed enough scope to work independently. Information and communication technology is used well in all lessons. Children use interactive whiteboards confidently and develop useful skills to support future learning. The range of equipment available outdoors places some limitations on what children can achieve in their physical development. Leadership and management are good. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a clear understanding of what is working well and which areas are in need of further development. Close working between Nursery and Reception staff ensures that children move smoothly from one to the other when the time comes. The 'Learning Journey' progress records illustrate children's achievements clearly and are much enjoyed by parents on their visits into school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rate of progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 to raise standards by the end of Year 2.
- Help pupils understand how well they are doing through a clearer focus on learning objectives in each lesson.
- Sharpen evaluations of the school's performance so that the effects that provision is having on pupils' achievement can be seen clearly and judged accurately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and from a low starting point standards rise to around the national average. Most Year 6 pupils attain the expected level for their age in English, mathematics and science. Most write well and about one third of pupils attain at an above average level in English. The proportion who attain this higher level in mathematics is lower because of difficulties they

experience solving mathematical problems. The transition the school has recently gone through has made accurate target setting difficult. While all the performance targets for Year 6 pupils were achieved in 2008, some were clearly too low. Much more challenging targets have been set for 2009 and, based on the progress pupils have made so far, the school is confident they will be met. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, standards at the end of Year 2 are below average. When they move into Year 1 pupils take a little time to settle to the National Curriculum and this Key Stage has suffered more instability than others. Now that things have settled down pupils' progress is beginning to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive carefully planned and effective support and make good progress. The needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language, particularly those at an early stage of learning English, are met well by experienced staff and these pupils acquire language skills at a good pace.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They mature into considerate, self-assured and well-mannered individuals who are a pleasure to be with. Pupils from all home backgrounds and cultures get on extremely well, playing and working in complete harmony. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils show high regard for staff, apply themselves very well in lessons and try hard with everything they are given to do. Pupils readily take on responsibilities to help others. Sports leaders organise games for younger pupils that increase their enjoyment of playtime substantially. Pupils are justifiably proud of the achievements of the school council and the contributions they have made to school and to those less fortunate than themselves. They enjoy school thoroughly and are appreciative of the many additional activities and opportunities staff provide. This is reflected in the good and rising attendance. Pupils feel totally safe in school, as expressed in the comment, 'Teachers look after you,' and they are confident that theirs is a school without bullies. They take immense pride in being able to represent their school at different events, such as the Choral Speaking Festival which took place during the inspection. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the importance of healthy living and respond very well to chances to be physically active and eat a sensible diet. This is acknowledged fully in the school's achievement of the Activemark. Pupils are prepared thoroughly for the next stage of their education and beyond. They acquire secure skills in literacy and numeracy, become competent in the use of ICT and learn how to get the very best from working with others. Involvement in the much enjoyed Enterprise Week has given pupils a very good understanding of the principles of business.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils are very eager learners because teachers provide activities and challenges which interest them. Teachers use a variety of approaches such as roleplay and talking partners to stimulate pupils to learn and keep them engaged and active. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. This encourages pupils to put forward their thoughts and ideas readily and productively and to ask for help and advice when they need it. It also promotes high standards of behaviour in class and pupils' application to work is extremely good. Most lessons move along at a productive pace but on occasions teachers do not leave enough time to round them off properly so that everyone is aware of what has been gained. Writing is taught well and pupils are given

plenty of opportunity to extend their literacy skills in other subjects, such as history and science. ICT is a prominent feature of many lessons and pupils and teachers use computers with confidence and skill. While most lessons start with teachers sharing objectives for learning with pupils, these do not necessarily provide a clear focus for what pupils have to achieve. Opportunities to develop pupils' independence and to provide a target against which progress can be measured by pupils and teachers alike are missed. Frequent opportunities to work collaboratively help pupils develop very good personal skills and the frequent praise they receive from staff boosts their self-esteem. Teaching assistants work well alongside class teachers, providing effective additional support for those who need help to join in the lesson and succeed with their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Work is planned thoughtfully and teachers work in teams to make the best of their expertise and ensure that the curriculum provides pupils with equal opportunities to learn. Staff have worked hard since the amalgamation to develop a curriculum that provides smooth progression of learning in all subjects and across all year groups. While this work is well advanced, it is not yet complete. In personal, social, health education and citizenship, for example, two different schemes of work, both of which have merit in their own right, have still to be merged fully into one cohesive programme. 'Special Days' feature prominently, such as the much enjoyed Cinderella Day for Year 1 pupils. 'POD' week provides the opportunity for pupils of all ages to find out things for themselves through investigations. Due attention is paid to pupils' different cultural and ethnic backgrounds when topics and themes are chosen, and lessons in Spanish give pupils an early experience of a modern foreign language. The curriculum for pupils who speak English as an additional language is planned well and contributes fully to the good progress they make. The school provides enrichment and extra-curricular activities of a very high quality. A large majority of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 participate in a whole raft of activities with something to interest everyone. These are provided at different times in the school day to ensure that no one is excluded.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Working closely together, staff provide a blanket of support which ensures that pupils are fully safe and very well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet current government requirements. Support for pupils who speak English as an additional language is very well organised and effective, particularly for the younger pupils, some of whom have limited experience of English. The school is passionate about pupils' attendance and punctuality and uses well-designed and rigorously applied strategies to minimise absence. Staff with pastoral responsibilities provide parents and pupils with ready access to confidential help and advice should they need it. A range of well-written policies support good practice but these are not signed and dated by governors and school leaders as they should be. There are excellent links with external services, including the Pupil Welfare Service, specialist nursing and the emergency services. Links with the children's centre and local secondary schools are good and provide smooth transition between different phases of pupils' education. Academic guidance has good features but also has areas that are not yet fully effective. Assessment and tracking procedures provide a useful overview of pupils' progress but lack a little depth and detail. This is something

the school is aware of and is working on successfully. Target setting is in place but methods vary between age groups and some pupils are given clearer guidance than others.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure that all staff and pupils feel fully valued and an integral part of the new school. As a result, the school has a clear sense of purpose and a strong team spirit. The deputy headteacher and senior staff provide good support for the headteacher and together they form a well balanced and cohesive senior leadership team. Senior staff analyse the school's performance regularly and use the information carefully to plan for improvement. However, evaluations of the impact of the school's work on pupils' achievements are often too positive because the criteria upon which these evaluations are based lack clarity and uniformity. This makes prioritising areas for further development more difficult than it should be. Teachers with leadership responsibilities have been given good opportunities for professional development and at all levels are making an effective contribution to school management. They have carried out detailed reviews which provide a solid platform for future development. Governors have played a full and active part in the school's inauguration and check the quality of its work regularly to ensure that pupils are receiving the quality of education to which they are entitled. Considerable care is taken to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn. Pupils from different home and cultural backgrounds speak very positively about the help they receive and how evenly everyone is treated. Community cohesion is promoted well. Links with parents are strong and the school pays close attention to the needs of the local community. The benefits accruing from the school's contribution to community cohesion have still to be analysed fully.

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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	NA
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?	2
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	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	2
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	1

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**

Thank you very much for the very friendly greeting you gave us, the inspectors, when we visited your school recently. Lots of you smiled and chatted to us which made us feel comfortable and welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed finding out about the work you do, and special thanks go to those who talked with us about the school.

Bare Trees Primary is a good school and I understand fully why you enjoy it so much. The school has a lovely atmosphere and you all seemed very happy. One of the things that I found most encouraging was how well you all get along. The way you help each other in class and play happily together at break times was very pleasing to see. Your behaviour is excellent and you can be very proud of the way you grow into sensible and caring young people. All in all, I think your personal development is outstanding.

I was very impressed by how hard you work during lessons. The progress you make is good but a little slower in the infant classes than in the juniors and this is something we have asked the school to look into. I thoroughly enjoyed reading what you had written in your books. The handwriting was neat and clear and the things you had written were well put together and interesting. Teachers plan lessons carefully and I was pleased to hear you say that you learn a lot from them. Some of the learning objectives they share with you at the start of lessons could be a little clearer and teachers will help you to use your targets better in the future. You can help by making sure you understand fully what the learning objective in each lesson is asking you to do, what your target is and what you need to do to reach it.

Staff take very good care of you and I know you appreciate all the help and guidance they provide. I am very envious of the many extra activities you have the opportunity to take part in and it is excellent that so many of you join in regularly. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to the choral speaking and feel sure you will have done well at the festival. I would have given you very high marks if I had been judging. Teachers who manage the school are always checking how well it is working but we have suggested that the measures they use need to be a little clearer. Thank you once again for a very enjoyable two days and best wishes for the future.