

Banks Lane Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106027
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	336602
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2009
Reporting inspector	John Dunne

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Rhodes
Headteacher	Mrs . Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 17 lessons or part-lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment data, individual education plans, case studies, policies and procedures and monitoring and evaluation documents. Sixty-seven parental questionnaires were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively leaders have embedded a common sense of purpose to ensure that all groups of pupils have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can
- the effectiveness of measures in improving the quality of teaching and learning
- pupils' understanding of diversity and how well the school is promoting understanding of community groups beyond the school and the immediate locality
- the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how effectively the provision for them is led and managed.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is lower than the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion is from minority ethnic groups and a few of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of a Nursery class and three Reception classes, which have an adjoining multipurpose learning and play area. Both have continuous access to separate open play areas. There has been a recent change of headteacher.

The school has gained a number of awards including: the ICT Mark, International School Award, Investors in People, Eco Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, Artsmark Gold Award, the Basic Skills Award and the Inclusion Quality Mark and Extended School Status. Additionally, it has been awarded membership of the National Outstanding Primary Schools for Initial Teacher Training.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Banks Lane Infant and Nursery School is an outstanding school. It has significant strengths in many areas including exceptional planning and the richness of the curriculum, which enable pupils to flourish personally and reach high standards.

Very strong provision in the Nursery ensures that children settle happily. They adapt rapidly to routines and quickly gain confidence and independence. In the Reception classes, all the adults form a closely knit team who meticulously record their observations of children's progress and plan very effectively for the next stages of learning. Activities are often exciting and this is reflected in children's considerable enjoyment and their high levels of motivation. Because of this and outstanding teaching, children throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage make exceptionally good progress. This rapid progress continues throughout Key Stage 1. Dedicated teams of teachers and teaching assistants plan innovative and varied learning activities. These are exceptionally well resourced and skilfully adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, all groups of pupils are well challenged. Computers and other new technology are used exceptionally well, both in lessons and for home learning. Consequently, the learning experiences enjoyed by the pupils are second to none. The resulting outstanding curriculum, delivered through consistently good and much outstanding teaching, enables pupils to reach levels of attainment which are significantly above national averages.

Pupils' behaviour, both in class and around school, is exemplary. Relationships with each other and adults are excellent. This makes a strong contribution to the quality of pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils speak very positively about how much they enjoy lessons because the themes around which most lessons are based are interesting. The senior leaders' vision in striving for excellence is infectious and unanimously shared. This is backed up by rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The way that leaders and managers at all levels collaborate effectively to plan sharply focused improvement plans is a significant strength of the school. This is exemplified in the way that the entire Key Stage 1 team successfully implemented measures to raise attainment in mathematics, which had dipped slightly in 2008. The impact of this was seen in the 2009 Key Stage 1 results which rose significantly. Governors have made a strong contribution to this picture of excellence. There has been a significant number of new appointments to the governing body and the recently appointed headteacher has ambitious improvement plans. The governors have identified the need to restructure governors' committees and consequently the ways in which they monitor the school's work to meet challenging new targets. The positive picture of continued outstanding outcomes, the effectiveness of leaders in rapidly and effectively dealing with fluctuations

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in performance shows the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors are able to continue to offer outstanding support and challenge to the school by:
 - restructuring its committees and meeting cycles to match the new school improvement plans
 - rapidly equipping newly appointed governors with the skills they will need through a challenging professional development programme.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Children's skills, knowledge and understanding when they join school are below those expected for their age. When they enter Year 1 they have made significant gains, particularly in their writing and ability to be independent learners. In 2009, standards, which had been significantly above the national average from 2006 to 2008, rose in all areas to the highest the school has ever had in recent times, particularly in mathematics. Lessons seen during the inspection confirmed this picture of outstanding progress and high standards.

The overwhelming majority of pupils greatly enjoy their lessons. This is a major contributor to their outstanding achievement. A memorable example was a group of pupils taking great delight in being able to work independently, following instructions which their teacher had placed on to their personal, digital voice recorders. This enabled them to make rapid progress in using positional language.

Vulnerable pupils and those with other barriers to learning, all achieve outstandingly well due the meticulous attention and well focused intervention they receive, often delivered by skilful teaching assistants.

Pupils are confident that they feel totally safe and bullying is not an issue. They are also taught well about recognising dangerous situations. Their understanding of dangers relating to new technologies is exemplary. They can explain the benefits of exercise and healthy eating and many take part in the extensive range of opportunities for physical activity. Pupils experience a multitude of opportunities to engage with the local, national and international communities. For example, by playing mathematics games and sharing experiences with children from round the world, using 'Tutpup' a secure, on-line communication system.

The school is effective in promoting good attendance, though attendance was adversely affected last year as a result of an influenza epidemic.

Lessons and assemblies are outstandingly effective in exploiting pupils' inquisitiveness, curiosity and wonder of the world. Pupils demonstrate excellent social skills and moral understanding in the way that they show consideration for others with a clear sense of right and wrong. They have an exceptionally good understanding of people from

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different backgrounds, religions and cultures because the school gives them so many rich opportunities to extend their experiences beyond their own everyday lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They plan lessons meticulously and are highly effective in using targets and assessments to provide challenge and to identify and remedy gaps in pupils' learning. Despite being a large school, teachers are highly successful in ensuring a consistent level of challenge for all due to their effective teamwork. Strong emphasis is placed on the basic skills in all lessons. Teachers incorporate a highly interesting array of activities to keep pupils interested and match different learning styles. All are skilful classroom managers; typically, lessons have at least six different activities targeted for specific groups to ensure work is closely matched to each individual's needs. Questioning is used skilfully to probe for meaning and deepen understanding. Teachers and pupils use new technology extensively to enhance learning. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the outstanding quality of teaching and learning.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The way in which the curriculum is planned and delivered is a strength. Almost all lessons are based around interesting themes and for each theme there is an enrichment activity to enliven learning. For example, pupils visited a museum to learn about dinosaurs at the start of the dinosaur theme. The curriculum for the visual and performing arts is exemplary and as a result, pupils achieve very high standards in these areas. Pupils as young as five sing complex harmonies and rhythms with precision and their film animations and art gallery are impressive. The school puts on an outstanding array of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, which are very well attended and greatly enjoyed.

Due to exceptional care guidance and support and outstanding partnerships with parents, carers and a wide range of external agencies, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or complex emotional issues, all make outstanding progress both academically and in their personal development. The school understands every child's individual needs and no stone is left unturned to ensure that these needs are met.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, other leaders and governors are dedicated to providing pupils with the best opportunities possible. The ambition for pupils to achieve their academic potential and develop into well-rounded citizens is embedded throughout the school. The highly effective way that leaders and managers work together towards well understood goals underpins the success of the school. Leaders have enabled a family ethos and calmness which permeates throughout to create an outstanding climate for learning. Expectations are high and the rigour of the school's monitoring of its work is of the highest quality. Pupils say that any form of discrimination is unheard of. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity and pupils' understanding of them is exceptional. Year 2 pupils' were so inspired by their visit from a Paralympics gold medal cyclist, that they persuaded the school to take all ninety of them to see the Paralympics cycling competition at the Manchester Velodrome. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Leaders have meticulously analysed their own community and have used this to plan an extensive range of experiences for both pupils and parents which promote community cohesion outstandingly well. The school links with four schools internationally and regularly celebrates cultural and religious festivals. Pupils were excited to talk about and

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show photographs and displays of when they dressed up for Eid, made dragons for Chinese festivals and the things they did on their Sri Lanka day.

Governance is outstanding because governors not only understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but they have been influential in determining its direction. Governors are also rigorous in ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and they discharge their statutory duties effectively. They have plans in place to successfully induct new members and to adapt their procedures to match changes about to be implemented.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make rapid gains in their learning and development from entering the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age. They thoroughly enjoy the exciting range of activities provided across all areas of learning. They quickly settle into their new environment and become curious, independent learners. Children's understanding of how to stay safe and healthy is a particularly strong feature of their development and the outstanding outdoor provision contributes significantly to this. Children are able to engage in collaborative play early on in the Nursery and all share and take turns well. By the end of Reception, children make outstanding progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy and are working securely within the Early Learning Goals.

Adults go to considerable lengths to involve parents in children's learning and as a result, parents are extremely well informed about their children's progress and many become effective partners in learning. This very positive partnership contributes well to

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children's outstanding progress.

Exceptional teamwork ensures that children's learning and development are of the highest quality. Assessment and planning go hand-in-hand, so that learning is tailored to children's individual needs. The quality of outdoor learning experiences is outstanding and highly effective in promoting all areas of learning. Teaching is always at least good and often outstanding. This excellent provision underpins children's outstanding progress.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides an exemplary model for other staff and promotes their professional development well. Consequently, the well qualified team are highly motivated and demonstrate drive and ambition for the highest standards of learning and welfare.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Approximately one quarter of families returned a parental questionnaire. These indicate that parents are overwhelmingly positive about the way the school cares for and educates their children. One parent wrote 'This is a brilliant school; my older daughter is now in junior school and she loved her time at Banks Lane, so I know my younger daughter will get the same high quality teaching and care to give her a great start to school life'. The views expressed were closely mirrored by what was seen during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Banks Lane Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 318 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	73	37	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	109	78	29	21	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	82	59	51	37	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	84	62	47	35	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	102	74	34	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	99	72	35	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	89	65	43	31	2	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	88	66	39	29	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	94	69	39	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	44	70	51	1	1	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	46	69	51	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	93	68	40	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	114	83	21	15	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



I am writing on behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us in your happy school.

We have judged that yours is an outstanding school.

You get off to a great start in Nursery and Reception and make fantastic progress in Years 1 and 2. We were especially impressed with the high quality of your singing and art work and how well you use computers. Your teachers make your lessons really interesting and you enjoy them greatly. Your teachers are also very good at setting different work for you. This means that those that can do something well can crack on with harder things and those that need more practice at something get the chance.

Your school puts on a lot of extra activities and trips for you and you appreciate this. Your teachers give you very good advice so you know how to improve your work. You are growing up to be polite, very sensible young people with a lot of self-confidence. You are a credit to your school with your excellent behaviour and the way everyone gets on well with each other. Everyone in the school cares for you and looks after you outstandingly well. Adults in the school are fantastic at giving extra help to those of you that need it. Banks Lane is a very safe and happy place for you.

Your headteacher, all staff and governors are doing an outstanding job. They are planning even more exciting improvements for you, which will make your school even better. We have agreed with your governors that they are going to think of ways that they can organise themselves differently, to help the school make these changes work really well.

All the best for the future!

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