

Birchfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123730
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340409
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Graeme Bassett

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire McSevney
Headteacher	Richard Culham
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who held meetings with the headteacher and senior staff, teachers, learning support assistants, governors, pupils and parents, and looked at lessons, pupils' work in books and around the school, teachers' planning and assessment files, curricular planning documents, pupil tracking and assessment records, school statutory policies, evaluations of teaching quality carried out by the school, and minutes of governors' meetings. Observations were made of the pupils in assembly, on the playground and in the dining hall. The team had conversations with groups of pupils and individuals, the headteacher, staff and governors. The team also analysed questionnaires, including 71 returned from parents, 36 from pupils and 38 from staff.

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

- whether the school is doing enough to raise standards in Key Stage 2 and to improve each pupil's achievement in writing in Key Stage 1, especially for the more able
- the effectiveness of marking and how well teachers use assessment tracking data for each pupil, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to accelerate their achievements and to raise the standard of their work
- the pupils' understanding of other people's customs and traditions as part of their development towards understanding community cohesion
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels provide a rigorous and purposeful direction in order to raise standards and achievement throughout

Information about the school

This large school draws most of its pupils from the immediate neighbourhood, and they are predominantly White British. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is broadly average. There is a small but growing number of pupils in the school who are learning to speak English as an additional language. The school has recently had a new extension to replace temporary classrooms. The school has recently gained the Healthy School award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has steadily improved in several aspects since the last inspection because of the clear direction given by the headteacher and the ambitions and vision to bring about improvements shared by the leadership and management team. Care, guidance and support given to all groups of pupils are good and the school's emphasis upon the development of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and interests is having a marked impact on raising standards.

The most significant development since the last inspection is in the quality of teaching. It is currently satisfactory overall. Many of the lessons seen were good and some were outstanding. This improved teaching is bringing about improvements in pupils' learning and progress, and already standards in speaking and listening, and science are rising. However, some of the more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently well because of inconsistencies in the way teachers use assessment records to plan what each pupil needs to learn next. The quality of marking is also inconsistent and some teachers do not give pupils sufficient guidance about how they can improve.

Pupils' overall progress is satisfactory. As a result, by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. However, some groups perform better than others. The pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well and enjoy their work, as do those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is because the school places great emphasis upon raising the standards of the less able pupils and those with other special needs. However, in spite of more rapid progress now being made in Year 6, the proportion of more able pupils exceeding the expected levels is broadly in line with national figures.

The school has good child protection and safeguarding procedures. A very large majority of pupils say they feel safe in school and that they are cared for well. In this caring environment, pupils make good progress in their personal development and well-being. Their moral and social development is good and pupils relate well to each other in class and readily help each other, although they have access to limited opportunities to develop their understanding of our modern British multicultural society. A small number of parents expressed a concern about behaviour, but the inspection team noted that the very large proportion of pupils behave well in and around the school. Their positive attitudes create a purposeful atmosphere that supports learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning for all pupils, but especially for the more able pupils, throughout the school by ensuring that:

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- assessment records are used more rigorously when planning tasks so that pupils build more securely upon what they have already learned
- teachers' comments when marking work or speaking to a pupil gives more detailed and precise guidance about what they need to do to improve.
- Develop pupils' understanding of the different customs and traditions of people in our multicultural society by ensuring that national and global links with other schools and children are promoted more thoroughly to improve community cohesion.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' learning as observed in the classroom is satisfactory and their performance in English, mathematics and science is average. Specific skills in areas such as art work and computer graphics work were in line with expected levels in most classes. Most pupils enter Year 1 with expected levels overall although their writing skills are still slightly below average.

At the end of Year 2, the standard of pupils' work in reading, mathematics and science is broadly average. There are still weaknesses in their writing skills and the proportion of pupils that exceed expected levels is below the national average. In Year 6, pupils' progress accelerates effectively because of the good and often better teaching. Consequently, pupils' work in English, mathematics and science is currently broadly average and observations show that the more able pupils now exceed average standards and that they are now achieving as well as expected for their ages. The pupils are developing satisfactory skills for their next school.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language are succeeding well and they make good progress in developing their spoken English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of the good provision to support their needs.

With good personal development and well-being, most pupils present calm and interested attitudes in lessons and they enjoy their learning. A very large majority of pupils show by their positive attitudes that they appreciate the caring and even-handed manner with which staff respect all of them. Attendance is broadly satisfactory and most pupils arrive at school punctually. Most have a good understanding of how to stay safe and understand the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The staff provide many opportunities for pupils to make good contributions to the school community. Many pupils are involved in monitoring and helpers tasks around the school. Others form the school council and older pupils willingly help younger ones with their reading and in the playgrounds.

These growing qualities within each pupil's personal development are having a marked influence upon the quality of learning throughout the school. Pupils are gaining confidence in what they might attempt in lessons. However, pupils' spiritual development and their understanding of the needs, customs and traditions of other people living in our diverse society are satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

When pupils use practical equipment they become more involved in their own learning and begin to show real understanding. Nearly all teachers use technology well and presentations engage pupils' interests effectively. The learning support assistants give good support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The planning of lessons is thorough and in the main takes account of the needs of different groups of pupils effectively, with particular emphasis upon the needs of the lower-attaining pupils. Assessment records are developing well but the present procedures are still in the early stages as the school changes from one system to another. Details of each pupil's progress are identified clearly in each class although, due to insufficient use of assessment data, more able pupils are not always challenged enough. Teachers and learning support assistants intervene well to promote pupils' learning, but the marking procedures are not yet consistent throughout the school. Written comments that advise pupils how they might improve are not a common feature of the marking and most pupils do not respond to these remarks.

The curriculum is developing steadily and a creative approach to planning work is now underway to establish cross-subject links. However, because the assessment information is not used effectively enough, the better quality of work seen in literacy books and lessons is not always reflected in work of other subjects. The school uses many worksheets which often restrict pupils' skills and particularly the development of writing.

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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Out-of-lesson activities are varied effectively across music, gardening and sporting clubs. Visits are an important part of pupils' spiritual and cultural experiences. Residential visits are enthusiastically supported and these enhance pupils' social and moral development very effectively.

The staff have good relationships with all pupils. This aspect of school life forms the foundation for all that the school is now attempting to achieve in order to raise standards. It ensures that all pupils thrive in their personal development and challenges all pupils to raise standards in all aspects of their development. All pupils are included in all that the school does. The school identifies quickly the needs of differing groups such as those who speak English as an additional language in order to provide additional support. For example, the school makes good links with the local Polish association to acquire additional support for those pupils who have recently come from Poland.

The school quickly initiates individual programmes of support for those pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good transition procedures to the secondary school enable pupils to have confidence to move on.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Following many recent changes in staffing, the senior leadership team is now securely established. These members of staff are beginning to take a stronger role in developing their responsibilities for subjects and other areas but do not yet take a strong enough role in whole-school evaluation and target setting. Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, have now established a system for monitoring the school's performance and the evaluation of improvements. The professional development for staff undertaken by the senior leadership team is now beginning to enhance and drive improvements in the quality of teaching. The school's leaders, including the governing body, work effectively with local residents to improve relationships across the neighbourhood. Good links have also been established with other schools and agencies in the local area. However, community cohesion in terms of wider national and global links is satisfactory but limited. This constrains the development of pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of our multicultural society.

The governing body fulfils its statutory duties. It ensures that safeguarding procedures are effective and supports other staff in an ambitious school ethos that promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Governors sometimes rely too much upon the

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school, and particularly the headteacher, to provide information. As a result the impact of the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, while satisfactory, is limited.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve satisfactorily through the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with standards of work that are broadly average, although standards in writing are still slightly below expectations. Children are calm and enthusiastic as they pursue different tasks. They enjoy being in school and are beginning to work quietly together. They enjoy using the facilities outside their classrooms. Good procedures to ensure their welfare are in place, such as washing hands before eating their fruit snack.

Teaching and support are satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Assessment observations are already pertinent to each child but at this early point in the term the planning of tasks, although satisfactory overall, does not yet pay enough attention to the needs of individual children. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory but slightly limited by the fact that the leader does not teach in the Reception classes this year.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents who replied to the questionnaire and those who spoke to inspectors expressed full support for the school. Frequent comments in support of the school included how impressed parents are with the school's work in supporting pupils' learning and personal development. Also, parents commented how helpful staff are in supporting individuals pupils and how well the school was run and organised. Very few questionnaire responses expressed any concerns with the school, although a few parents felt that their children could be challenged more.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birchfield Community Primary 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 350 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	66	22	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	64	22	31	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	35	49	35	49	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	55	31	44	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	41	58	29	41	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	58	28	39	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	66	23	32	0	0	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)	38	54	23	32	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	56	29	41	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	48	28	39	1	1	5	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	41	33	47	3	4	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	41	58	28	39	0	0	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	65	23	32	1	1	1	1

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.



30 September 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Birchfield Community Primary School, Yeovil BA21 5RL

Thank you for helping us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. There is a good caring attitude in your school and it is a happy place. Well done!

These are the things that we judged to be good in your school:

- Your headteacher provides a clear direction to the leadership and management work of the school.
- The teachers and other staff in your school work well as a team and support your headteacher well.
- While teaching is satisfactory overall, in some classes the teaching is good or even outstanding, particularly when your teachers use practical equipment and technology well.
- Your teachers give you good encouragement to answer questions and, because of this, your work is steadily improving.
- The Reception classes are well resourced and children settle quickly to school routines so that they begin to work with one another.
- Throughout the school, the staff care well for you. As a result, you are all developing good attitudes towards your work and towards each other.
- You have a good understanding of how to remain healthy and keep safe.
- You are very polite and your good behaviour helps to create a positive environment in school.

There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- ensure that teachers make better use of records about your progress when they plan tasks, so that you can build more securely upon what you already know, and that they always show you clearly how you can improve and what you need to learn next.
- develop your understanding of the different customs and traditions of people in our multicultural society by ensuring that national and global links with other schools

and children are promoted more thoroughly.

Once again, thank you for your help. You can help by asking your teachers how you can make your work better.

Graeme Bassett

Lead inspector

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