

Birchen Coppice Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135045
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	341605
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicky Gale
Headteacher	Liane Billingsley
Date of previous school inspection	2 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The majority of inspection time was spent visiting 21 lessons, including every class and teacher and an assembly. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, the school leadership team and the headteacher. They observed the school's work, and looked at the full range of school documentation, including the school development plan, records of monitoring, pupils' progress records and minutes and agenda of various meetings. This also included a review of the local authority monitoring and the school improvement partners' reports. Inspectors also considered the views of the small number of parents (14) who expressed them.

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

- achievement and attainment in English and mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2
- the quality of teaching
- levels of attendance and the impact of recent initiatives to reduce absence levels
- provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including outdoor provision
- the impact of leadership on improving pupils' progress and the capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

Birchen Coppice is an average size primary school. It opened in 2007 following a local area reorganisation. There followed a period of unsettled staffing and organisation which has now been safely negotiated. The school serves an area of significant social and economic deprivation. Many pupils arrive in school with complex social and emotional needs. Over half of all pupils are entitled to free school meals and a similar proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities. In each case this is well above national averages. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few are in the early stages of learning English. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is a Nursery and Reception class. A private nursery operates on the same site but was not inspected. The school plans to move into brand new premises, currently being completed on the same site, by mid autumn 2010. The school was given a notice to improve in January 2009 following its inspection.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Birchen Coppice is an improving school which now provides a satisfactory education.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress, albeit from very low starting points. However, attainment by Year 6 remains low, particularly in speaking and writing skills. The school has responded well to the areas for improvement in the last inspection; leadership is decisive and energetic and a strong team of teachers and other adults show very considerable care for the pupils. As a consequence, relationships in school are much improved, behaviour is satisfactory and an appropriate curriculum is now in place which offers scope for even greater progress in the future if the planned changes take place. A key contribution to this improvement is made by the diligence and commitment of the current headteacher and her staff. The school now has the confidence of the local community.

Self-evaluation is accurate and honest. The improvements noted in the previous inspection have continued and gathered pace, demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning, although satisfactory, continues to improve. Accurate monitoring of teaching shows that the proportion of good teaching has risen since the last inspection although some of this monitoring is too general in nature and not closely focused on groups of pupils at risk of underachievement. All staff work as a supportive team committed to school improvement. Safeguarding procedures are good. The pupils say they feel safe and are proud of their school. They are welcoming and friendly, enjoy taking responsibilities and successfully raise funds for charities. They are keen to learn and say that they would like even harder lessons. Pupils say that they enjoy their school and are proud of it. They recognise the improvement recently and especially enjoy the range of visits and clubs.

The school has improved provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage considerably in the last year and it is now satisfactory and improving rapidly under effective management. As advised, the school has invested heavily in outdoor provision since the last inspection and now has a 'fitness trim trail', covered pagoda and a secure area which is well utilised by small groups.

Attendance is currently low, largely as a result of the persistent absences within a small number of families. The school has worked hard to reduce absence rates. In autumn 2009, attendance rates approached national averages for the first time at 93.7%. This was from an all-time low of 88% a year ago.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 6 by increasing the opportunities for pupils to work independently and by encouraging the use of a rich vocabulary, both written and spoken, in all lessons.
 - Improve attendance levels to national averages by September 2010.
 - Refine the focus of the monitoring of teaching to increase the proportion of teaching judged to be good or better.
 - Monitor the impact of proposed changes to the curriculum, to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Outcomes for pupils are improving securely and are now satisfactory although there remains a distance to go to redress completely a long-term legacy of weak performance. Attainment levels on entry to school are very low, particularly in language skills. Although attainment is improving, the school acknowledges that levels are still low although current work in books is much closer to what is expected. Particular weaknesses include poor speaking and listening skills, a fragile grasp of basic number work and insecure literacy skills such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation. In previous years the progress made by pupils, particularly in the older classes, has been inadequate. This progress is at least satisfactory in mathematics and better than this in some aspects of literacy, especially reading, and in science. Information and communications technology is used well to support learning. The new pupils' progress records show that almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making at least satisfactory progress. The school is confident that in the national tests in 2010 around 60% of pupils will reach the required levels by age 11 in English and mathematics. This represents a significant improvement on previous years although it is still low.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Although there is a wide range of appropriate activity to promote cultural development, including some delightful displays of work celebrating diversity, this currently lacks a systematic plan or any detailed evaluation of the impact on pupils' views. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of their future readiness for work, despite their low attainment. Many pupils grow plants or make birthday cards which are then sold for charity along with ice cream. A 'Spend and Save' scheme in partnership with a local housing association helps pupils learn to budget, and strong links with the high school, a business and enterprise specialist college, enhance this understanding.

Attendance is low and it is proving difficult to maintain improvements. Attendance improved considerably in autumn 2009 but since then rates have dipped again.

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Behaviour is much improved and is now satisfactory. It is noticeably better when pupils are fully engaged with their lessons and shown encouragement by teachers. Pupils are relieved by this improvement in behaviour and say there is now minimal bullying. One pupil expressed it as 'occasional falling out - in the old days we would have kept it going - now we get over it quickly and make friends again'. They are especially appreciative of the wide range of clubs and extra activities the school provides - including some innovative activity such as a computer generated exercise class and dance clubs - but say that the best thing about their school is their teachers. The attention they give to a healthy lifestyle is good with a good awareness of the importance of healthy diet and lifestyles. Pupils contribute via concerts and charitable acts to their local community and enjoy taking responsibility in school through the school council or the buddy bench.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is satisfactory overall but with elements of good practice. Teachers' planning and their use of assessment, for example, are now good. This is contributing to pupils' better progress

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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but the full impact of this on attainment is yet to show. Consistent strengths, observed in almost every class, were good relationships between pupils and adults, effective behaviour management and a precise use of time.

Classrooms are calm and orderly places which encourage effective learning. There were some examples of innovative use of resources, including interactive whiteboards used by younger pupils. In most cases pupils knew what was required of them and they responded with enthusiasm, especially to practical and investigative activities that stimulated their thinking and enjoyment. Teachers also use a range of strategies to secure progress in literacy, including, for example, 'talk partners' to promote discussion, and frequent breaks to explain or share learning. There are, however, some consistent features of lessons that cap teaching as satisfactory rather than good or better. These include examples of limited expectations by teachers of what pupils can achieve and missed opportunities to extend pupils' language skills by not insisting on a precise use of vocabulary from pupils. On occasions teachers dominated discussion sessions themselves rather than allowing pupils to contribute.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all statutory requirements. It is enriched by a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors. These include dance and other physical activity and the school has a successful brass band. The school has appropriate plans to adapt the current curriculum in the future, for example, by introducing 'boy friendly' writing schemes to improve the literacy skills of boys. Although the school uses the timetable effectively there is no systematic method of covering lesson time and content that is missed by pupils either due to absence or when pupils leave to do other things in school. The response to homework is also variable both by pupils, who occasionally miss doing it, and teachers who sometimes let them. Marking is of good quality and up to date.

The school takes the safety and welfare of all pupils seriously and safeguarding procedures are good. 'Bob the Builder' and the county architect both visited school recently to involve the pupils in their new school premises being built nearby, including building site safety reminders. Safeguarding procedures involve regular and good involvement with outside agencies. Child protection training is up to date. The care and guidance shown to pupils is a key strength of the school and appreciated by pupils and parents alike.

Despite inadequate attendance, the school has embarked on a wide range of initiatives, including regular prizes for good attendance - a scheme which is very popular with the children - and is taking appropriate action with families that persistently miss school. There are also plans to start a Wake Up club in partnership with the YMCA, a 'pick-up and breakfast' scheme starting in April 2010 and full involvement in an attendance initiative with the family of schools locally.

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

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

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?

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with considerable strengths at headteacher level. The headteacher has won the confidence of the community and pupils. Her energy and efforts on behalf of the pupils show a professional integrity and honesty and this experience and commitment to the pupils in the school are bearing fruit. She has secured considerable improvement in both provision and resources whilst managing the difficult initial phase of the new school. She has an accurate and honest view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has an ambitious vision for the future, including overseeing the move to new premises in the near future.

The wider leadership team has recently been through a restructuring with a few more changes to come, including a newly appointed deputy headteacher. Subject leadership in school is increasingly effective. Coordinators monitor both standards and progress well. Governance is satisfactory but lacks urgency and does not make a full contribution to the completion of key strategic documents, such as the school improvement plan. These tend to be left to the headteacher to do. In the past governors have not held the school fully to account but they are increasingly doing so. There is a full committee structure although there are some vacancies yet to be filled.

There is a greater clarity of roles now evident and the full weight of responsibility is increasingly being shared amongst a capable team. The school currently operates a significant deficit budget, partly as a result of staffing difficulties over time which will require action in the short and medium term. The school works satisfactorily to promote community cohesion and equal opportunities via carefully tailored activities within the community and ensures good safeguarding procedures are in place.

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

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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

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory with some emerging strengths. Children receive a good induction into school and teachers plan a range of activities well. Relationships between children and adults are positive and constructive with plenty of encouragement to do well. There is a good mix of directed activity and free choice. The school has responded well to the requirement in the previous inspection to improve outdoor provision and children now enjoy a covered pagoda and other opportunities for energetic and well directed play. Teachers plan and use assessment well to adjust lessons appropriately, and show good questioning skills. This is helping to build stronger language development for the youngest pupils. Parents are fully involved and the school makes home visits regularly. This enables children to settle well and gain rapidly in confidence. The effective leadership of Early Years Foundation Stage receives good support from other adults, with high levels of collaboration. The learning journey diaries are a useful record of children's progress but do not record all areas of learning as yet.

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

Only a small number of parents and carers (14) responded to the inspection questionnaire. Their views were very strongly supportive of the school with some special praise for the current leadership. The school has conducted surveys of parental views regularly in the past which confirm the very positive support from the local community. Parents say their children are happy and recognise the efforts the teachers are making on their children's behalf. A few commented that their regular newsletters could provide more information about what happens in lessons and what progress is being made.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birchen Coppice 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 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 235 pupils registered at the school. Some of the responses were blank for some questions and not all totals will add to 14.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	42	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	5	33	8	58	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	50	6	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	42	7	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	42	7	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	50	6	42	1	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	42	7	50	1	8	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)	6	42	6	42	1	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	33	8	58	1	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	42	7	50	0	8	1	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	25	9	67	0	0	1	8
The school is led and managed effectively	6	42	7	50	0	0	1	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	7	50	6	42	0	0	1	8

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



22 January 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Birchen Coppice Primary School, Kidderminster, DY11 7JJ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we recently inspected your school. You will remember that we spent a lot of time in your classes, met with groups of you and saw how well you worked.

It is clear that your school has improved considerably since last year and now gives you a satisfactory education. Behaviour is better and your teachers, who all show a great deal of care for you, have put a great deal of effort into making your lessons more interesting and suited to your abilities. This effort is paying off although there is a way to go before it shows in your English and Mathematics results. In these subjects, even though you are making much better progress, the standards you reach are not as high as they could be. As a result we have asked your school to keep working on this and to check regularly that your lessons remain suitable for everyone and that the headteacher and her staff keep a close eye on what you and your teachers are doing. We call this monitoring.

The school keeps you safe and teaches you to have healthy lifestyles. The range of clubs and activities are good and you clearly enjoy them. This is all helping to prepare you for your next school. We did find that too many of you do not attend school as well as you should. This is an important target for your school to improve and we would ask all of you to complete your homework on time, not to miss or be late for school and to try to use full sentences in your answers.

I would like to wish you well for your future.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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