



Birdwell Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106595
Local Authority Barnsley
Inspection number 287558
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Joe Peacock

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sheffield Road
School category	Community		Birdwell, Barnsley
Age range of pupils	5–11		South Yorkshire S70 5XB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01226 742957
Number on roll (school)	132	Fax number	01226 742597
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Cllr Alan Schofield
		Headteacher	Ms J Gilmour
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002		

Age group 5–11	Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006	Inspection number 287558
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Situated in an ex-mining community on the outskirts of Barnsley, almost all pupils come from a White British background to this smaller than average school. Falling rolls across the Barnsley area have resulted in a significant drop in numbers since the previous inspection. Infant pupils are taught in mixed-age classes but all the junior pupils are in relatively small single-age classes. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average and the number with learning difficulties is also below average. The attainment of most children when they enter the Reception class is below that expected for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school has accurately judged itself to be good in virtually all areas and outstanding in one. The quality of care, support and guidance provided to pupils is outstanding, ensuring equality of opportunity for all. It is one of the main reasons why pupils do so well. Consequently, the school is providing good value for money.

The headteacher has been the main driving force for the past 10 years and has succeeded in creating a school that the community can be proud of and which pupils enjoy attending.

Standards and quality in the Foundation Stage, judged as satisfactory by the school, are in fact good. Reception staff provide children with a good range of stimulating and exciting learning opportunities. Limited funding caused by the drop in numbers has delayed the development of the outdoor learning area, but staff work extremely hard to compensate for its inadequacies. Good use is made of the spacious, attractive grounds when the weather permits, and the recently installed adventure play area on the field. This ensures that all children make good progress in all their areas of learning, achieving the targets expected of them by the end of their Reception year.

By Year 2, almost all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, continue to make good progress and achieve the standards expected of them. Their performance in writing has improved markedly since 2005 due to some decisive action to raise standards, such as providing more opportunities to write in all subjects. The exceptional support for pupils in the small single-age junior classes ensures that they too make good progress. By Year 6, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have made exceptional progress as they have been provided with sufficiently challenging work and the support they need to complete it. Overall standards are above average with many pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. The very few who arrived speaking no English last year have made remarkable progress because of the excellent support that they have received from staff and pupils alike.

Very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and pupils' good attitude towards their schoolwork, are contributing effectively to their good personal development and well-being. The school has recently introduced a social, emotional and learning programme to further strengthen provision and, along with other measures, this results in pupils' social and moral development being outstanding. Although there are very few minority ethnic families in the area, care is taken to give pupils a good knowledge and understanding of different cultures and world religions. High standards of behaviour are expected and pupils respond positively. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and set challenging work for all. There is a purposeful atmosphere for learning throughout the school. Teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils' learning, especially for those who find learning difficult. Staff plan lessons meticulously and carefully monitor the progress pupils make. Good use is made of

computers but not all classes benefit from having the latest interactive whiteboard technology and some of the very old computers in classrooms no longer work. The curriculum is good, being enhanced by lessons in French and German. Pupils also have a good range of activities to enjoy outside normal school hours. As a result, pupils of all abilities are successfully motivated and challenged by the interesting tasks that they are given to do. Assessment procedures provide a wealth of information on the standards being achieved and they enable pupils' progress to be carefully tracked as they move through the school. Parents and pupils know what targets have been set and these are closely monitored and evaluated by pupils and their teachers.

Leadership and management are good. Staff are successfully developing their monitoring role by working in pairs to support one another and helping to identify strengths and priorities for improvement. All regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and all other aspects of school life. As a result, the school has good capacity to further improve. The governing body benefits from the leadership of a knowledgeable and experienced chair of governors, but its role in evaluating the school's effectiveness is not well enough developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision for outdoor learning and play for Reception children.
- Involve governors more in monitoring all aspects of the school's effectiveness.
- Improve the quality of resources for information and communication technology.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in Reception. Their achievement is good in all areas of learning due to the effective teaching provided by staff with a high level of specialist knowledge and skills for this age group.

Pupils in Years 1 to 6 continue to make good progress and, by Year 6, standards are above average with pupils achieving the challenging targets expected of them in English, mathematics and science. This includes a very small number who have English as an additional language. The most recent 2006 national test results show a marked improvement on those for 2005. School initiatives to improve standards in English, especially writing, and science have resulted in 9 out of 10 attaining the standards expected and a third reaching above average standards. The achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding as they benefit from a whole range of programmes designed to help them and the close attention of their teachers and teaching assistants in the small junior classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to this school and that they really like their teachers. Some parents believe that their children 'come on famously' at the school. High

standards of behaviour are expected and achieved, resulting in a safe, happy school free from bullying. Attendance is consistently above average.

Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with their social and moral development being outstanding features. Topics such as 'Good to be me' successfully raise pupils' self-esteem. Effort and achievement are recognised and rewarded; as a result, pupils have the right attitude towards school and try to do their best in everything. Cultural development has a high profile as the school endeavours to raise pupils' awareness of different cultures and religions in a community with few minority ethnic families.

Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Their contribution to the school and local community is good. For example, they are participating in activities such as fundraising and making masks for a local arts carnival which the school has organised for the community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers provide a consistently good quality of teaching and learning. Strengths are the quality of teachers' planning, which takes into account the full range of learning needs within the class, and the excellent relationships that exist with pupils. As a result, pupils are highly motivated to learn. In one outstanding lesson, for example, Year 4 pupils thoroughly enjoyed their science investigation to see whether a knot in the wire stopped the flow of electricity. Where it is available, teachers make good use of modern technology such as laptop computers and the latest interactive whiteboards to enhance learning and make lessons interesting and enjoyable. Teachers' questioning skills are better in some classes than others. Expertise to help and support pupils with learning difficulties is widespread and the small classes mean that they can receive the support that they need, when they need it. French and German are taught well and pupils enjoy learning these languages.

Assessment is good, including in Reception, and it clearly shows how much progress children make. Assessment information is used well to set targets for individual children.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A very good range of activities is provided to meet pupils' individual abilities, needs and interests. Close links made between different subjects provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and computer skills. A recently introduced programme to enhance the provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional development is making a significant contribution to their relationships and attitudes to learning. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good. The Reception staff compensate well for the limitations caused by the lack of a developed outdoor learning area. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding.

Individual education plans for them include precise and realistic targets that are reviewed regularly.

Karate, chess and drama are examples of the good range of things for pupils to do after school. These activities are well attended and contribute much to pupils' personal development and their learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Excellent systems are in place to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being. Parents agree that their children are looked after exceptionally well in this caring and friendly school. Academic guidance is outstanding with pupils having individual consultations with their teacher about their targets and a fortnightly review of 'my learning steps' where they help to evaluate their own progress. The support given to pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding with different waves of intervention programmes such as Beat Dyslexia and Early Literacy Support. As a result, they make exceptional progress. The support for the highest-attaining pupils is also strong with those in Year 6 acting as peer tutors for those in Year 4 in weekly mathematics sessions, helping to raise standards considerably.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is an exceptional leader and manager, totally dedicated to improving standards and the quality of education for all pupils. Equality of opportunity is a strength, ensuring that all pupils are valued and effectively supported in their learning. The school has largely succeeded in addressing weaknesses identified in the previous inspection but inadequacies in the outdoor accommodation for Reception children remain unresolved, though a plan is in place. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is mainly accurate because staff are constantly evaluating standards and the quality of provision. The school improvement plan consists of three correctly identified priorities for improvement but, within this, there is the flexibility to respond quickly to any other areas causing concern. Overall, governance is satisfactory. The governing body is well led by a long-serving and knowledgeable chair of governors and all governors are keen to support the school. Their involvement in monitoring the school's effectiveness, however, is limited at present. Nevertheless, the school's capacity to continue to improve is good.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making me feel so welcome! I really enjoyed talking to you all and looking at your work. These are the particularly good things about your school.

- Your headteacher and all the staff are working hard to help you to enjoy being at school and to give you exciting and interesting things to do.
- You all behave well in class and always try to do your best work.
- You all have a good start in your Reception year with lots of interesting things to do. Your pictures to show what the tooth fairy looks like were excellent and I saw how much you enjoyed using your noses to smell things such as soil and bananas.
- There are many things for you to enjoy after school. I love playing chess and wish that I had the time to see how well you could play. The karate club members looked impressive in their white kit.
- All of you are cared for and supported very well by your teachers, classroom assistants and the lunchtime staff.

I am asking your teachers to concentrate on doing something about these things:

- improving the outdoor space for Reception children so that they can learn and play outside as well as in the classroom
- improving the computer resources for each classroom
- asking the governors to check how well the school is doing more thoroughly to help it to improve further.

Thank you again for helping me with this inspection. I can see why you enjoy coming to school so much. You are right to be proud of your school because it is a good one. I hope that you will carry on enjoying your school work and help the staff to make the school even better.