

Burnsall Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121622
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314059
Inspection date	7 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Kathleen McArthur

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Grayshon
Headteacher	Mr John Collings
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Burnsall Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 6BP
Telephone number	01756 720273
Fax number	01756 720273

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and its use of assessment, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, lesson observations and pupils' books. Discussions were held with staff, pupils and governors, and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than most schools and is located in a remote rural area. The original building dates from 1602 and an additional classroom was built in 2003. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. They come to the school from a wide area and about half of them travel by school bus. All are of White British heritage and none is eligible to take a free school meal. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. An acting headteacher who has been in post since April 2008 is currently leading the school. This is because the permanent headteacher left in March. The school holds the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is improving rapidly due to good leadership from the acting headteacher. Good, searching school self-evaluation by the acting headteacher and governors and good support from the local authority has established a clear focus on school improvement. Self-evaluation is already having a beneficial effect. A positive spirit is apparent, giving the school a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The school benefits from good parental support and parents are pleased that their children are happy in school. Many wrote comments supporting the recent organisational changes implemented by the acting headteacher and governors.

When children start school their attainment is a little below that expected nationally for their age, although this varies greatly from year to year. Most pupils achieve well as they move through the school and reach standards in line with national averages by the time they leave in Year 6. However, standards vary from year to year owing to the small number of pupils involved. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 match national averages: a slight decline since 2005 reflects lower attainment on entry to school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well because they are skilfully supported and fully included in all activities. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate good speaking and listening skills. They use a varied vocabulary, express their ideas with confidence and listen carefully to instructions. Despite the generally good achievement, more able pupils could do even better.

Personal development is good, as is spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good relationships feature strongly across the school and ensure pupils are happy and progress well. They behave well and show good levels of care and concern for one another. They have a good understanding of how to be healthy, proudly describing the 'home-made' healthy school meals, and eagerly participate in the many physical activities on offer. Key Stage 2 pupils spoke enthusiastically about going to the local high school each week for swimming and lessons in physical education: a large number take part in fell running. Pupils feel safe and cared for and know staff will listen and help if they have a problem. Good rates of attendance demonstrate their enjoyment of school. They are keen to be involved with local events, such as Grassington Festival, and the school enjoys good links with St Wilfrid's and other local churches. As a result of links with schools in different geographical locations, pupils meet others from different cultural and faith backgrounds. School councillors carry out their duties responsibly. Good attitudes, academic skills and their ability to cooperate, work and play together prepare pupils well for future life as responsible citizens.

Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan plenty of practical activities in lessons to make learning more relevant. Younger pupils, for example, were very careful to make sure everyone got exactly the same amount when weighing sultanas for their class to eat at play-time. Good relationships ensure pupils behave well in lessons and progress well. Teachers do not always expect enough of their pupils and the level of challenge can be inconsistent: sometimes the more able pupils are not stretched enough. Pupils then switch off and their progress slows down. Recent reorganisation to make better use of the skills of the teaching assistants, assigning each one to a particular class, is proving effective, especially in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, at times their skills are not used well enough, for example, when the teacher is talking to the whole class. Sometimes, these talks go on for too long, leaving pupils too little time to get on with their tasks.

The curriculum covers all statutory requirements satisfactorily, giving appropriate priority to developing literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Enrichment is good and the school makes good use of the beautiful locality. The rich range of visits, visitors and residential visits extend pupils' experience well beyond the classroom: some of their favourite activities are science experiments and going for local walks. Good partnerships with local schools broaden the curriculum effectively, for example, sports coaching. After-school clubs are very popular and well attended: parents actively support them and often provide transport so pupils do not have to miss clubs to catch the school bus.

Pastoral care is good: strong local links enable staff to know their pupils and families well. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all current requirements. Links with external support agencies benefit pupils, especially those with extra learning needs. Academic guidance and systems for setting targets are at an early stage of development. Pupils know their targets but are not fully involved in assessing how well they are doing or guided enough about how to improve their work.

Leadership is satisfactory. The acting headteacher and governors are working closely with the local authority, implementing robust action plans to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and leadership. Governance is satisfactory. Strong leadership by the chair ensured governors carried out their duties correctly and considerately in managing the process of appointing an acting headteacher at short notice. Consequently, learning was not disrupted, although the rate of overall improvement was slower than under normal circumstances. Subject responsibilities are fragmented and subject leaders do not yet have a clear role in school improvement. Improving ICT provision was the issue from the previous inspection. Pupils now competently access a suitable range of equipment. The budget is carefully managed so the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children are taught alongside Year 1 and 2 pupils. They make a good start, enjoy school and progress well so they meet the expected goals at the end of their Reception year. They mix happily when working with the older pupils in the class, which promotes their learning and helps them mature sensibly. Teaching is satisfactory with good features in the provision of investigational activities: children really enjoyed getting their hands into the dough when making ginger biscuits in a numeracy activity. Work is soundly planned to meet the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. However, the overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory rather than good because there is limited provision for freely chosen play usually available for children of this age on a continual basis. Children have opportunities to work outside but the area is too small to provide a full range of learning or challenging physical activities. Nevertheless, the school is aware of these shortcomings in provision and is working hard to overcome them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teacher expectations and provide work that is suitably challenging especially for the more able pupils.
- Ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to raise levels of achievement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

I would like to thank you all for making me very welcome when I visited your school. Everyone was friendly, polite and very helpful which really helped me complete my work. When you were outside in the sunshine, I was very impressed by your skills with the hoops: twirling four or five together, throwing them high and catching them expertly without dropping them.

I told your school council I would write to tell you what I found.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education and looks after you carefully. Your parents agree that you are happy in school so you make good progress and reach the right standards for your age. You told me your work is interesting, especially all the extra activities and you are keen to attend all the clubs. I hear that many of you are very good fell runners and I saw you enjoying your lunches so I could tell you all know how to be fit and healthy. You told me you feel safe in school and I heard about all the activities you share with all the schools in the Dale. It was good to see the way you older children help the little ones and I know you try hard to help others through fund-raising.

I have asked the school to do a few things for you. More of you could reach the higher levels so look out for extra challenges in your work! I have asked the staff to help you to know exactly what you must do to improve your work. Lastly, I have asked that subject leaders take a more active role in improving the school.

I am sure you will continue to enjoy being with all your friends and everything you do at Burnshall School.