

Birch Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109893
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	343756
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Susan Gadd 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	433
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Fletcher
Headteacher	Mr Alan Harding
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 16 teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including policies, the school development plan, the tracking of pupils' progress, reports from the School Improvement Partner and questionnaires completed by 100 pupils and 83 parents and carers.

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

- evidence about current attainment, learning and progress for all groups of pupils, especially since the last inspection
- whether pupils understand how to improve their work
- the extent to which teaching and assessment consistently meet the needs of all pupils
- the impact of leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, in ensuring that effective steps are taken to embed ambition and drive improvements forward.

Information about the school

Birch Hill School is larger than the average primary. It has an Early Years Foundation Stage that admits children part-time from the age of three. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The latter group includes pupils who have moderate and specific learning difficulties and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties including Down's syndrome and Asperger's syndrome. There is an onsite after-school club that is not managed by the governing body. This is inspected separately as it is not part of the school.

When it was last inspected, the school was given a notice to improve. It was asked to improve the rate at which pupils make progress in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, to ensure that more of the teaching and learning is of good quality and to improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress and their learning in lessons.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The overall effectiveness of Birch Hill Primary School is inadequate. The headteacher and senior leaders have worked towards improving the provision and outcomes for pupils since the last inspection. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies the areas for improvement. However, these efforts have not brought about the necessary improvements at a rapid enough pace. Consequently, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception they make good progress and enter Year 1 with broadly average skills, ready for the next stage of their education. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress by the end of Key Stage 1, although it is inconsistent between classes and year groups. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is now broadly average but in recent years it has been above or well above average. At the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is broadly average, showing that pupils did not build upon this good start and that their progress in English and mathematics was inadequate. This is due to inadequate teaching and assessment. Overall, teaching is not of sufficiently good quality and consistency. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the support they receive.

Despite teaching and assessment being inadequate, there is a small proportion of good classroom practice. In most lessons, planning does not reflect pupils' prior achievements and pupils often receive work which does not match their needs, especially the more-able pupils. Learning objectives are too broad and often unexplained so pupils are unclear about what they are learning. The opportunity for pupils to assess their own learning as well as that of their peers is limited. Marking is inconsistent across the school and only occasionally provides targets to support pupils in understanding their 'next steps to learning'. As a result of this, not all pupils understand their targets or how to improve their work.

Since the last inspection, the local authority and an independent consultant have

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been working with school leaders to develop their skills in monitoring the quality of teaching and assessment and developing strategies to improve the teaching of mathematics. However, these initiatives although appropriate, have not yet had sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and assessment or improved pupils' progress. Assessments of pupils' work are carried out at regular intervals but the process of moderating these to ensure their accuracy is still at an early stage of development. Consequently, teachers are still developing their own understanding of the expectations within each level.

A new document plots pupils' attainment throughout the year. Currently, the data are not complete for all pupils. The data that is available is not used in a sharply focussed way by all leaders and managers to consider which groups of pupils require specific support to alleviate inadequacies. As a result of this, the school does not have a clear enough overview of the progress that different groups of pupils make over time or within different classes. Although leaders are engaged in monitoring new initiatives, there has been little evaluation of the impact of these on pupils' progress.

Governance is inadequate. Many governors are new to their role and have had limited impact on challenging the school to address weakness and bring about improvements.

Pupils receive good care, guidance and support. Pupils know they can turn to an adult for support and advice. They are clear about situations that may affect their safety and feel very safe in the nurturing environment. Many parents and carers are supportive of the school and pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Many pupils enjoy the opportunity to participate in sporting events and have a good understanding of the importance of being healthy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in English and mathematics and improve the quality of teaching and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers have an accurate grasp of expectations for each National Curriculum level
 - developing planning so that it effectively uses pupils' prior achievement to ensure that work set challenges all pupils, including the most able, to achieve their best
 - ensuring that the learning objective for each lesson is specific and clearly explained to pupils
 - making sure that pupils know and understand their targets in English and mathematics and that marking provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - providing pupils with regular opportunities to be involved in evaluating their own learning and that of their peers.

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- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are effective in driving forward improvements by:
 - ensuring that all pupils' attainment is assessed regularly and the data are used to inform interventions
 - effectively using current data to gain a stronger grasp of pupils' progress, both within subjects and as pupils move through the school
 - improving the quality of monitoring so that there is a sharp focus on measuring the impact of initiatives on pupils' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

A lack of sharp focus in monitoring activities, together with inadequate teaching and insufficient analysis of tracking information, has resulted in inadequate achievement. The results of the 2009 national tests indicated that attainment was broadly average at the end of Year 6, but that progress in English and mathematics was inadequate. This has been the case for several years, particularly in mathematics. The school's internal data show that, despite the initiatives since the last inspection, progress during this academic year remained inadequate. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics in Year 5 and in English in Year 6. The school's data, lesson observations and work scrutiny reveal that there are pockets of inadequate progress throughout the school in English and mathematics. This results in inadequate progress over time. Some potentially vulnerable pupils make good progress. Overall, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the effective interventions and support they receive both in class and through one-to-one support.

Pupils make a good contribution to their school and the local community. They enjoy school and talk with pride about the changes they have brought about through their school council. They have recently developed a quiet area and are currently considering how best to incorporate a climbing frame within the playground. Pupils are given many opportunities to take on responsibilities and are particularly complimentary of the 'angels and guardians'. These pupils support others at break and lunchtimes through becoming buddies. Older pupils enjoy reading with younger children and hosting lunchtime events for local senior citizens. Beyond the school, pupils support a variety of charities, such as 'Red Nose Day' and UNICEF.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils appreciate circle time and personal, social and health education lessons. They were keen to explain the importance of expressing their feelings during circle time as it provides a valuable opportunity to talk about concerns and consider the difference between right and wrong actions. Culturally, pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to engage in artistic and musical events. Currently, a number of pupils are practising 'street dancing' and looking forward to competing against other dancers. The curriculum

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provides adequate opportunities to learn about other religions and the school is considering ways of developing pupils’ understanding of world issues related to cultural perceptions.

Regular attendance and the application of basic skills ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for their next stage of development.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	4
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	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	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and assessment is inadequate overall. However, there are some pockets of good and satisfactory teaching. While this inconsistency exists, pupils cannot make the rapid progress required to overcome past and current inadequacies. Knowledge of prior attainment is often not used to set challenging work and so many pupils making inadequate progress in lessons because work is too easy. This is particularly the case for the more-able pupils. In some lessons, learning objectives are not shared or are too broad to enable pupils to assess their own learning. Some pupils spend too long listening to the teacher and so have insufficient time to complete tasks. Boys in particular occasionally become disengaged from their learning. Although learning support staff are used effectively to support pupils during group work, they are not deployed adequately during the introduction to many lessons. Despite these inadequacies, pupils’ behaviour in class is good and pupils are eager to learn and cooperate well with one another. Where the interactive whiteboard is used effectively, it enriches the curriculum and ensures that pupils are

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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engaged.

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced. The school is at the early stages of making links between subjects so that learning takes place in a meaningful context. Although the curriculum meets the needs of different groups satisfactorily, the school is considering how to adapt the existing curriculum planning so that it has a greater impact on achievement. A number of pupils commented on how much they enjoy the range of sporting opportunities, such as 'Kwik cricket', hockey and tag rugby. Pupils participate in the many school clubs and the opportunity to visit places of interest which support their learning.

The school provides good pastoral support for its pupils. Strong links with outside agencies ensure that some potentially vulnerable pupils make good progress in their learning as a result of improved attitudes, confidence and behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
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?

The headteacher and senior staff have established a caring ethos within the school and this is shared by all staff. Safeguarding procedures are good. As a result, pupils know that they are supported and well cared for.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have tried to deal with the issues raised at that time. However, the initiatives have not had sufficient impact on accelerating pupils' progress or improving the quality of teaching and assessment. In addition, monitoring activities do not focus sufficiently on the school's work and, as a result, the strategic plan has not had the desired impact on improving pupils' outcomes. The headteacher and deputy headteacher recognise this weakness in their current monitoring procedures. Consequently, leaders and managers have not taken effective steps to embed ambitions among all staff and ensure that improvements are lasting or effective.

The headteacher is determined to address these inadequacies. Currently, however, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate as the required improvements since the last inspection have not been secured rapidly enough. Inspection evidence indicates that there is significant inequality in terms of the amount of progress that groups of pupils make as they move through the school.

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The school’s ability to promote equality and tackle discrimination is therefore inadequate. The governing body has not taken appropriate steps to hold the school to account. The Chair of the Governing Body is aware of these inadequacies and has plans to work with the local authority to develop the capacity of the governing body so that its members can begin to have an impact on improving pupils’ progress.

Parents receive information on a regular basis through newsletters, curriculum evenings, the school’s website and annual reports. The headteacher is often available before school in the playground so that parents and carers can talk informally about any concerns they may have. Termly open evenings provide parents and carers with an opportunity to learn about targets set. However, the school is aware that these communication systems have not resulted in improvements in pupils’ achievement and that parents and carers would appreciate more information about the progress their children make. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has carried out an audit of needs and has identified actions to be taken.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
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	4
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	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader provides strong leadership and ensures that good transition and welfare arrangements enable children to settle in extremely quickly, feeling safe and secure. Children enter the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception, they make good progress as a result of the good teaching and are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. During activities that children initiate for themselves, they display good personal and social skills. They behave well, are independent and confident and able to communicate with their peers and the adults that support them.

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There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led learning both inside and outside the classroom. Such opportunities enable children to practise skills in all areas of learning. Teachers use their observations to plan well for the needs of individuals and identify their next steps. This involves adapting the curriculum to match the interests of individuals. Good teaching, effective questioning and a stimulating environment enable children to make good progress.

Effective communication procedures ensure that parents and carers are involved in their child’s learning experience through induction events and the regular sharing of information. Staff are available to parents and carers at the beginning and end of the day. However, the school is aware that some parents and carers have expressed a desire for greater communication between home and school. The school is considering ways of addressing this issue.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school. They were particularly positive about how their children enjoyed school, understood the importance of being healthy and how the school has due regard for their child’s safety. Inspection evidence concurred with this. A few parents and carers were rightly concerned about the inconsistent progress that their children make as they move through the school.

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Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Birch Hill 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 83 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 433 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	67	26	31	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	71	22	27	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	38	46	36	43	8	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	48	35	42	5	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	46	55	34	41	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	40	48	38	46	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	57	35	42	1	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)	37	45	35	42	6	7	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	40	48	35	42	4	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	34	46	55	5	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	45	40	48	4	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	49	59	30	36	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	52	63	26	31	2	2	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%.

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Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.

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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 pupils' 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.



25 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birch Hill Primary School, Leppington, Bracknell, RG12 7WW

I visited your school recently with three other inspectors. Thank you to those of you who talked to us about your work and life at the school. There are some good things happening in your school but we feel it needs special help so that you can all make more progress with your work. This means that inspectors will visit the school again to make sure things get better and your learning improves. This is what we found.

- Your headteacher and staff care for you well and they work closely with other adults outside school to support you.
- Many of you do not make the progress you are capable of because the teaching is not always good enough. This is especially the case in English and mathematics.
- Behaviour around the school is good.
- You enjoy taking on responsibilities and are pleased with what the school council has achieved.
- You know the difference between right and wrong and enjoy being healthy.
- You like attending the many clubs.

We have asked your school to do the following things.

- Make sure the teaching helps you to achieve your best, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Make sure that marking in books helps you to know how to improve your work and that you get an opportunity to consider how much you have learnt.
- Make sure that the work you are set is not too easy for you and that you understand your targets in English and mathematics.
- Get better at knowing how well you are learning and how much progress you are making as you move through the school.

You can all help by regularly attending school and continuing to work hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector

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