



# Birches Green Infant School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 103169  
**Local Authority** Birmingham  
**Inspection number** 286582  
**Inspection date** 9 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Alison Grainger

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant	<b>School address</b>	Birches Green Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Erdington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3-7		Birmingham B24 9SR
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4644310
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	221	<b>Fax number</b>	0121 4644774
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Kate Wildman
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Ricketts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2002		

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## **Description of the school**

The school is situated three miles north of Birmingham city centre. About two-thirds of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few from minority ethnic families are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below average. An above average percentage is eligible for free school meals. Taking the intake as a whole, children's skills are a little below the level expected on entry to the Nursery.

The headteacher has been in post for a year. Several other new teachers have been appointed during the last year.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school in which everyone is working together for the benefit of the pupils. It is moving forward well as a result of sharp and effective self-evaluation. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a strong and clear educational direction and has quickly gained the full confidence of parents, staff and governors. Parents are delighted with the school. They say they cannot believe how many new things are happening to involve them and to meet their children's academic and personal needs.

It is no wonder that pupils enjoy school a lot. Good care, guidance and support ensure that their personal development and well-being are good. Pupils grow in confidence, feel safe and secure at school, and know that each one of them is valued. They are well prepared for their future lives. As one parent commented, 'The display in the school entrance under the heading "Every Child Matters" says it all'. This view is reinforced by a pupils' comment that, in this school, 'Everybody is a friend to everybody'. All of this begins from the moment children enter the Nursery and Reception Year.

Standards in Year 2 are close to the level expected nationally and pupils' achievement is good. However, standards are not as high as they were and the school's results dipped in 2006. The school identified that the dip was in part related to the characteristics of the year group but also recognised that aspects of its provision required improvement. Swift and effective action was taken and there are signs of higher standards now in Year 1.

Whilst pupils are progressing well now from entry to the Nursery and Reception Year to the end of Year 2, they make better gains in mathematics than in reading and writing. The school is already taking much effective action to improve pupils' rate of progress in reading and writing and, in particular, to increase the proportion reaching the higher levels. It knows that although it has already done much, this is an area needing continued focus.

The main reason for pupils' good progress is that teaching and the curriculum are also good. Lessons are enriched well by activities such as clubs, visits and visitors. All groups of pupils learn well in lessons. Effective group support is provided for pupils needing extra help. However, there are some occasions in whole-class sessions when teaching is aimed at the middle ability and does not take full account of all pupils' needs.

Although there are outstanding features in the attention to pupils' personal welfare, the school knows that the academic guidance needs improvement. New systems of individual target setting are in place and marking is good. However, pupils do not understand clearly enough how they can use their targets to improve their performance.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading and writing and increase the proportion reaching the higher levels.

- Ensure that teaching in whole-class sessions always takes full account of all pupils' needs.
- Develop pupils' understanding of how they can use their targets to improve their performance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception Year. As a result, almost all are on course to reach the goals expected at the end of the Reception Year. A good proportion are expected to exceed these goals.

Until 2006, pupils' results at the end of Year 2 were consistently above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. They fell in 2006 and the school did not achieve the targets it had set itself for the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and writing.

Standards are average now in Year 2. Although they are still not as high as they were, they represent good achievement in relation to the pupils' starting points. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress across the range of their schoolwork. Although progress is good, it is better in mathematics than in reading and writing.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Children in the Nursery and Reception Year make a strong start in their personal, social and emotional development. Pupils of all ages appreciate the way in which they are looked after. They say that children are kind to each other. The attendance rate is close to the national average and pupils are absent only for reasons such as illness.

Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Only occasionally do pupils become restless or inattentive during a lesson. Pupils know the importance of safe practices, such as when moving equipment in physical education lessons. They have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. Several parents commented that their children tell them off at home if they think that a meal or choice of snack is not healthy enough!

Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They gain a keen awareness of the needs of others, for example as they raise funds for charities. They are proud of how their ideas are used to 'help to make the school better' through the new school council. Overall, they develop the skills and attributes necessary for their future lives well.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Good teaching contributes much to pupils' enthusiasm for school and their desire to learn. Classrooms are well organised so that pupils are able to show independence in finding the resources they need. In Year 2, for example, pupils readily found 'number squares' to help them with their calculations in mathematics. Throughout the school, teachers explain the purpose of each lesson and activity clearly so that pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach basic skills accurately.

Teachers are good at matching group activities to pupils' needs. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support groups and individuals working on tasks. An aspect of teaching that requires sharpening is the way in which account is taken of all pupils' needs in whole-class sessions. Sometimes not enough is done, for example to target questions at different abilities.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. In the Nursery and Reception Year, there is a good balance between adult-led activities and those that children select for themselves from a range provided. The school recognises that the use of the outdoor area requires development.

New approaches to reading and writing are proving effective throughout the school and are rightly being developed further. The increasing use of role-play is creating meaningful situations for writing for pupils of all ages. These new developments supplement the already good opportunities for writing in subjects such as religious education and history in Years 1 and 2. Basics in information and communication technology are developed well through other subjects, for example mathematics.

Over the last year, pupils have been provided with many exciting new activities to enrich their daily lessons. Themed weeks are adding a more creative dimension. The range of clubs has increased.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

A high priority is given to pupils' personal welfare. Initiatives such as the 'Buddy Club' and the playground 'Friendship Stop' do much to help those who need a bit of extra personal support. The care for vulnerable pupils is sensitive and tailored to their individual needs. Arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety are rigorous. Much is done to help pupils develop healthy lifestyles. 'Wake Up and Shake Up' exercise sessions at the start of each morning are enjoyed by many parents as well as pupils. The school

has been highly successful in ensuring that pupils have healthy meal choices at lunchtimes.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and developing. The tracking of individual pupils' progress has improved significantly over the last year. As a result, there is now quick identification of pupils whose progress is slower than it should be. However, pupils do not have enough understanding of the individual targets set to help them to make progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management are driving the school forward. The pace of recent development is impressive, as is the commitment of all to improvement. Strong teamwork extends beyond the staff and governors to parents through a newly formed parent-teacher association and to the pupils through the School Council.

On appointment, the headteacher quickly recognised the school's existing strengths and accurately identified the areas most in need of improvement. As a result, the school is on course to raise standards and improve pupils' progress further.

The school is increasing the involvement of all teachers in evaluating provision and in making decisions about priorities for action. A new senior team with clear roles and responsibilities is becoming established. The school is clear about how leadership and management roles, such as responsibilities for subjects, need to be strengthened further.

Governance has developed a lot recently. New systems are in place to increase the extent to which an already proactive and knowledgeable governing body contributes to the school's self-evaluation. Given the many important and successful developments, the school is demonstrating good capacity for further improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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	2
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 helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. I met a group of Year 2 pupils who told me a lot. They told me that you think the school is good. You are right!

I found that you are very sensible young people. You behave well in lessons and around the school. I saw how well you settled in your classrooms at the start of the day. Just before that, I saw the 'Wake Up and Shake Up' on the playground. It looked really good fun. You know a lot about how to keep healthy and what foods are good for you.

The adults look after you well. You told me how safe you feel at school and that the children are expected to be kind to each other. It was good to hear how much you appreciate the Friendship Stop on the playground and the Buddy Club.

You are getting on well with your schoolwork. This is because the teaching is good. You have lots of extra activities such as clubs and themed weeks. These help to make school fun as well as helping you to learn.

It is good that you can give your ideas to the School Council to help to make the school even better. I know that all the adults are working hard together to improve the school. Your parents are helping too. I've asked your teachers to do some things to help with this.

I've asked them to make sure that you all do as well as you can with your reading and writing. It would help you to have activities more closely matched to your needs when all the class is together on the carpet. I know that you now have targets in the front of your books. I have asked the teachers to help you use these more to improve your work.

Thank you once again for helping me.