

Banks Lane Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106027
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	287390
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Halford

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Rhodes
Headteacher	Mrs Eddie-Jane Cook
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2002
School address	Hempshaw Lane Offerton Stockport Cheshire SK1 4PR
Telephone number	0161 4809252
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average infant school serves an area of mixed housing in Stockport. The school shares a site with a neighbouring junior school which is under separate leadership. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, and few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has received a number of awards including Investors in People, the Healthy Schools award, Inclusion Mark, ICT Mark, Basic Skills Award and ArtsMark Gold. It is nationally recognised as a centre for initial teacher training.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Clear vision, excellent evaluation of the current position and detailed action to sustain high standards combine to make this an outstanding school. It is led by an exceptional headteacher who, with the help of her able deputy headteacher and senior leaders, combines rigorous monitoring of provision with much encouragement and support so that staff know exactly what is expected of them. Staff have very high expectations of what the pupils can achieve. They also have the determination and skill to ensure that pupils' enjoyment abounds within the school. Parents are generous in their praise; their comments summed up by, 'Banks Lane Infant School takes children from a wide variety of social and academic backgrounds and stretches them to, and in some cases beyond, their individual levels.'

Children join Nursery with well below average skills and achieve exceptionally well to reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. One of the school's particular strengths is the way in which, through the strong focus given to creativity and the use of information and communication technology (ICT), the pupils are able to make connections between different subjects. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average and this position has been maintained since the school was last inspected. Pupils' personal development is excellent and is greatly helped by the high quality care, guidance and support which all staff offer them. Relationships are particularly strong at all levels. Pupils play enthusiastically and behave sensibly and safely, thoroughly enjoying all the exciting activities that the school offers them.

The school has extremely detailed and thorough monitoring arrangements for all staff. This contributes particularly well to ensure that teaching and learning are of the highest quality; this is central to the exceptional progress made by the pupils. Detailed monitoring of pupils' progress throughout the school ensures that those likely to fall behind, or those progressing rapidly, are quickly identified and swift action is taken. The school's self-evaluation systems form an integral part of its everyday practice. As with all its work, these systems are regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure that they are being used to optimum effect in the pupils' best interests. Since the last inspection, under the clarity and vision of the headteacher, newly appointed members of the leadership team have grasped their opportunities with real purpose, ensuring that the school maintains its outstanding provision. The governing body is knowledgeable and challenging. The school has excellent capacity to sustain its current position and is providing excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Because of its excellent self-evaluation, the school is already taking effective action to sustain high standards and to ensure that teaching and learning are of high quality throughout the school. It has no significant areas for improvement that are not already included in its current development planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Many children enter Nursery with knowledge and skills which are well below those expected for their age. At the start of the Reception year, they are joined by a significant number of other children who have not attended Nursery and most of these boys and girls also start with below average skills, particularly in the areas of language development and writing. Through

the Foundation Stage, they all make excellent progress and by the start of Year 1 pupils' standards are broadly average for their age. This strong progress continues with almost all pupils showing particular enjoyment and love of learning and, by the end of Year 2, pupils' standards are above average. Assessment data show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics have all been above average for several years, and inspection evidence indicates that there is a wide range of high-quality work undertaken in other subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language are catered for excellently, make particularly good progress and are able to join their peers in all their activities. Overall, this represents outstanding progress over time for all pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding area of the school's work and central to its success. There are particular strengths in the pupils' enjoyment of learning and the very wide range of opportunities the pupils have in making a positive contribution to the school community and beyond. Pupils are intensely proud of their school. The school council has an important influence on this, and council members are pleased to talk about its work promoting the Healthy School initiative and about the school's charitable work in Africa. Its members are keenly aware that their views are taken into account and can influence what the school provides. Additionally, they are learning skills which will serve them well in adult life.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary in each area. Behaviour is excellent and pupils learn to work independently and collaboratively. Attendance percentages remain satisfactory, despite the school's best efforts to improve them. Overall percentages are lowered by childhood ailments impacting significantly on the regularity of young children's attendance. Nevertheless, pupils show very positive attitudes to all they undertake and the above average standards they achieve are a testament to their sustained effort and pleasure in their success. For example, their singing in assembly was a joy to behold. To hear 200 pupils from Years 1 and 2 sing a three-part round, in perfect tune and time and entirely unaccompanied, was a rare privilege.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding and contribute immensely to the above average standards the pupils achieve. The teaching staff are confident and very thorough in their work, as befits a school actively linked with the national initiative in school-based initial teacher training (SCITT). Lessons are planned meticulously, based upon a thorough assessment of what has gone before. Perceptive questioning enables pupils to think logically, gain confidence and extend their speaking and listening skills. Pupils are managed very effectively, and able and well informed teaching assistants support lessons. Pupils respond very well to all the adults with whom they come into contact, and the expert use of interactive whiteboards presents high-quality visual learning for the pupils. The strong emphasis placed on the creative arts and active learning extends pupils' enthusiasm and enables them to make effective links between work undertaken in separate subjects. They use ICT skilfully and produce written work of very high quality. Teachers work hard to challenge pupils of all abilities. Pupils know this and rise to the challenge extremely well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it enables all pupils, including the children in the Foundation Stage, to excel in both their academic and their social development. In the Foundation Stage, provision for all areas of learning is very good; it is thorough, with outdoor learning activities regularly timetabled. Throughout the school, the curriculum is thoroughly planned with a strong focus on basic skills, with speaking, listening and writing skills used frequently across the curriculum, while at the same time providing extensive enjoyment of learning through themes and creativity. Pupils thrive on this wide range of learning experiences. The use of creative arts enriches pupils' learning exceptionally well. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activity for pupils and Spanish is taught throughout Key Stage 1. Exciting links are made between subjects so pupils can see how learning in one subject helps them in others. Every opportunity is taken for pupils to write widely; ICT is a natural part of teaching and learning and pupils are adept at using it. The Artsmark Gold award reflects the high quality of pupils' work in the arts. Stunning displays are seen around the school and in pupils' work as well as high quality models designed and constructed by the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides a very caring and extremely friendly environment. Staff have a close knowledge of the pupils and their families. Pupils are encouraged to 'have a try' which leads to their increased confidence and self-esteem through an appreciation of high quality work. Appropriate procedures are in place to safeguard pupils and ensure their health, safety and well-being. Pupils say that their teachers are caring and assist in sorting out problems should they arise. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme is in place, and a buddy system operates from the start of the school year as pupils settle into new classes. Both these initiatives contribute very positively to the pupils' personal feelings of safety and security in school. Academic guidance is excellent and is central to the pupils' all-round achievement. Pupils have a good level of involvement with their work, a keen awareness of their targets (which are displayed in a common format in every class) and a clear understanding of how to improve their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at risk of slipping behind are supported very effectively through a wide range of interventions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are integral to the school's sustained success. The headteacher's strong, purposeful and clear leadership has successfully created and maintained a climate in which everyone is constantly striving to improve the pupils' academic and social development. All staff share this vision. They have an excellent knowledge of the needs of each pupil and the systems in place to track pupils' progress are outstanding. They track individual progress with precision and readily identify the next steps of learning. There is a very firm belief that staff and pupils should 'take risks' and 'have a try' in exploring new ideas, and there is encouragement from senior management to do so. As a result, the school presents a curriculum to the pupils which is both innovative and very enjoyable. Staff are encouraged, through high-quality professional development from senior managers, to use their expertise confidently

not only for the benefit of pupils in their own school but also for others in the locality. Governance of the school is excellent. Governors are strong supporters of the school but are equally confident in questioning procedures and initiatives.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Mrs Henderson, Mrs McIntosh and I all really enjoyed our recent visit to your school.

We hope that the visit the Reception children made to Chester Zoo went very well and it did not rain too hard. Thank you very much for your warm welcome and for looking after us so well. You were very helpful in lessons when we asked you to explain what you were doing and also very friendly around school. Particular thanks should go to members of the school council who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much.

We do not think you will be surprised to hear that we think Banks Lane Infants is an excellent school because it helps you all to make really good progress in your work and you all seem to enjoy yourselves so very much. We were impressed with your confidence and genuine care for others. You behave well, are keen to take on responsibilities and are very good at including everyone. We think that you are lucky that your teachers organise so many exciting things for you to do. We really liked the way you use ICT, your wonderful artwork and your excellent singing in assembly, even without the piano.

Your headteacher and other senior teachers know how good your school is and what they need to do next to keep it working so well for you. They know that your standards in reading, writing and mathematics are good and they help you to link your work together and produce beautiful displays which have all sorts of interesting work in them. We will remember the artwork and the writing you did on the story of the willow pattern plate and the wonderful model tractors some of you have made. We have every confidence that they will continue to make your school keep up the excellent work it is doing.

With our very best wishes for the future - we do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment.