

Banks Lane Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106028
Local Authority	Stockport
Inspection number	309008
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Andrews
Headteacher	Mrs J Caygill
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2005
School address	Hempshaw Lane Offerton Stockport Cheshire SK1 4PR
Telephone number	0161 480 2330
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The school was inspected by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average-sized primary school shares a site with an adjoining infant school which is under separate leadership. It serves the immediate area of established private housing, but some pupils travel a significant distance to attend. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is also well below average, and very few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is significantly above average. This is largely because many of these pupils attend from across the local authority, owing to the school's inclusive provision. The school holds many awards. These include the Basic Skills Quality Mark, the Inclusion Mark, Activemark, Artsmark Gold, Silver Geography Mark and Eco Schools Bronze Award. Additionally, the school has had a long association with the Fosbrooks Educational Trust which operates in the school and promotes the creative arts, particularly music, folk dance and drama.

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 that has made significant progress since the last time it was inspected. Particularly strong progress has been made in aspects of its curriculum provision, and in the care it takes of its pupils, including them in all activities. The school places high value on pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These areas of the school's work are outstanding and lead to very high levels of enjoyment for the pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school; their comments are summed up succinctly by the following: 'My daughter is in Year 6 and has loved being a pupil at Banks Lane School. I have always felt safe and comfortable leaving her at school and her education couldn't have been any better.'

Most, although not all pupils, have attended the adjoining infant school and leave Year 2 with above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessments undertaken of Year 3 pupils in their new surroundings, during the first half term, indicate that their overall standards in basic skills are just above average. They make good overall progress through Key Stage 2 and attain standards in English, mathematics and science which are consistently above average. They reach exceptionally high standards in music and art and they also achieve well in other subjects, including geography and physical education. The school effectively promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles, and the strong emphasis on personal development leads to particularly good behaviour and excellent attitudes to work.

Teaching and learning are of good quality, with some examples of outstanding teaching. Well informed teaching assistants support pupils well. They are central to the good overall progress pupils make, particularly those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. While pupils are placed in ability groups for English and mathematics teaching in Years 4, 5, and 6, many lessons seen, throughout the school, included the same tasks for all pupils and did not take sufficient account of the differing abilities of the pupils in those groups. Equally, the school has good systems for tracking the academic progress of each individual pupil, but the marking of pupils' work is not consistent. While some marking is of the highest quality, some does not give sufficient guidance on how pupils can improve their work. Pupils feel safe in school and know that they are cared for. The school's provision in this area is very thorough.

Leadership and management of the school are also good. The headteacher is very capable and has a clear vision for the school. The school has an accurate knowledge of its strengths and a clear picture of its areas for further development. Senior managers and subject leaders are knowledgeable and keen to develop their expertise. The relatively recent changes in management responsibilities are becoming well established. Governors are well informed, supportive of the school and suitably challenging. They discharge their duties well. The school has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match work more precisely to the differing abilities of pupils.
- Ensure that teachers' marking consistently helps pupils to know how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter Year 3 with levels of attainment which are just above average. This represents a slight falling off from the above average standards reported at the end of Year 2 from the neighbouring infant school. The reasons for the difference are that not all pupils entering Year 3 have been to the neighbouring school, several pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities join from other areas of the local authority, and the initial assessments made in the first half term are undertaken while pupils are becoming established in their new surroundings. Once pupils are settled in Year 3, they make good progress throughout Key Stage 2 in the basic skills of English, mathematics and science, and attain standards which are above average and on a steadily improving trend. In 2007, the Year 6 pupils attained standards which were above average in English and mathematics, but disappointing results in science depressed their overall performance. Records of individual pupils' progress during 2008 show that this decline has been reversed and good progress has again been made. A significantly increased percentage of the current Year 6 group are on target to attain the higher levels in English and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who made up almost one third of the Year 6 group in 2007, make sustained good progress. High percentages of these pupils attain the national averages over time. Many pupils make especially good progress and achieve high standards in all aspects of creative arts, but most notably in music and art, because of the outstanding curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, and central to the school's success. Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding and contributes strongly to their exceptionally good behaviour and good attendance. Pupils feel very safe in school and show a really good knowledge of how to keep healthy. The school council is active and its members are proud of the offices they hold. They know their views are taken into account. The school has a very high profile in the local community. This is clear from the pupils' involvement in local activities, in the manner in which the school itself is used by local groups and sports clubs, and in the number of former pupils who return to school to maintain their active involvement in its music and dance. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Every opportunity is taken to extend pupils' skills and knowledge, raise their self-esteem and broaden their experience to prepare them particularly well for adult life. This is seen to excellent effect in the wall display of diary writing, where pupils express their feelings of apprehension as a school production draws near, and then write of their feelings of exhilaration when the event has been completed with great success. Visits abroad, such as the recent visit to Assisi, and the school's work in art and history contribute extremely well to pupils' understanding of other cultures. The sterling work undertaken in this caring school contributes immensely to pupils' positive relationships and the excellent attitudes of all who learn in it. This is reinforced by the strong support recorded by parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is consistently good and some lessons are outstanding. This has a positive impact on the learning of pupils. The brisk pace and good use of interactive whiteboards, practical activities and first-hand experiences really engage pupils' interest, and this is reflected in their obvious enjoyment for learning. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary, overall. In most lessons, pupils are clear about what they are to learn and what they need to do to succeed. Relationships are excellent, and most pupils are confident when joining in discussions and question and answer sessions, together with the many opportunities that arise to work with a partner or in small groups. These opportunities develop pupils' speaking, listening and thinking skills effectively. Very good support from skilled teaching assistants ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in all activities and make the same progress as their peers. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored, but teachers do not always use this information well enough to plan a sufficient variety of tasks that offer appropriate challenge to pupils of differing abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It successfully balances the steady improvement in pupils' standards in basic skills, while supporting a very broad and effective balance in other subjects. There are particular strengths in music and art, while the school has also received public recognition for the quality of its work in physical education, geography and information and communication technology (ICT). The well established link the school has with the Fosbrooks Educational Trust is central to its excellent provision in music, drama and folk dance. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which are supported by large numbers of pupils, in addition to arts weeks, dramatic productions and frequent visits by specialist visitors. All these activities contribute to, and support, all aspects of pupils' personal development as well as their academic progress, and many extend teachers' expertise. Residential visits, some to European destinations, add much to pupils' interest, enjoyment and learning. The school is justly proud of the work it undertakes in developing and providing this excellent curriculum. The pupils know this, respond to it exceptionally well, and are equally proud of their success.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Within this, the care and support elements are of the highest quality, and are part of the comprehensive provision the school makes to ensure that the personal development of pupils is at the heart of all it does. Child protection and health and safety procedures are well established. Safeguarding procedures meet national guidelines. As a result, pupils indicate that they feel happy, safe and free from risks in school. Pupils are aware that their welfare is of high importance to the school and they respond well to this. Academic records are very detailed. Staff track the progress of individual pupils with great care and provide support of high quality for those who need it. The school is very strong in its inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and they respond to this by achieving well. Academic guidance is good. Where improvement can be made in the provision of academic guidance is in teachers' marking of pupils' work. There are examples of particularly

high quality marking in some classes and for some groups of pupils, but this is not consistent across the school. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do next to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's strong commitment to securing the best for all pupils and providing them with a broad range of experience to serve them well in adult life is at the heart of this school's work. She has a clear vision and high expectations for the future development of the school. Ably supported by her recently established and committed senior leadership team, she ensures that this vision is shared by all. There is a clear focus on raising standards in basic skills, while maintaining an exceptionally broad curriculum provision. There are good opportunities for staff to further their professional development and to contribute to school improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, but monitoring is not always rigorous enough to identify inconsistencies, for example, in the quality of marking of pupils' work. The school demonstrates an outstanding commitment to inclusion of all pupils. The careful deployment of staff ensures full participation and good progress for all. Governors are supportive and show a strong interest in the work of the school. They are well informed and are becoming increasingly involved in the development of the school. Resources are used well to support pupils' learning and finances are well managed.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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 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	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	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

Inspection of Banks Lane Junior School, Stockport, SK1 4PR

My colleagues and I really enjoyed our recent inspection of your school. Thank you very much for your very 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 the school. Particular thanks should go to everyone who spoke with us and who helped us to understand why it is that you enjoy your school so much. I particularly enjoyed my discussion with some Year 6 pupils about your recent end of year production and hearing about the musical trip to Italy.

We think that your school is good in the ways in which it ensures that you work hard, cares for you and provides interesting things for you to do. We think that it has some outstanding elements, especially in the wide range of activities you are offered in music and art, physical education and drama. I was very impressed by the Year 3 artwork in the style of Lowry, and the 18 Year 3 pupils practising the accordion at lunchtime! All these things help you to make good progress and achieve above average standards in your work.

We also hope that our visit will help your school to improve. We are asking the staff to do two things. Firstly, we are impressed with some of your teachers' marking which really helps you to know how to improve your work. We are suggesting that good marking should be extended to all your classes. Secondly, we noticed that in many lessons all the pupils were asked to do the same work, and we felt that some of you might make even better progress if tasks were matched closely to your needs.

Thank you once again for all your help when we made our visit to you. We send you all our very best wishes for the future. We do hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do at the moment, and our best wishes to those boys and girls moving on to high school in the next few weeks.