

Gawber Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106603
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	309171
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2008
Reporting inspector	John Rutherford 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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Borrett
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Brown
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Church Street Gawber Barnsley South Yorkshire S75 2RJ
Telephone number	01226 289728
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2007, following a period of difficulty for the school.

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 overall and aspects of its work are outstanding. The outstanding aspects are the provision of care, guidance and support, the personal development and well-being of the pupils, and the quality of education in the Foundation Stage. The new headteacher has empowered staff to bring about rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. These aspects of the school's work are now good. The school has the full support of the majority of parents and it provides good value for money.

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and their standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is good in science and standards are well above average. However, until this year, pupils' progress has been slower in English and mathematics and standards were not high enough. The new leadership team quickly identified the causes of this and took immediate effective action. Pupils now make good progress in English and mathematics and they are on track to achieve much higher standards.

The improvements made by the leadership team are in the teaching of writing and the provision of work to enable higher-attaining pupils to achieve more. These aspects are now both good. The school recognises that pupils' skills in mathematical investigations and problem-solving are still not as good as they could be. The quality of teaching and learning overall is improving and it is now good with some outstanding features. There remains, however, a small proportion of teaching which, though broadly satisfactory, needs to be improved in order to raise pupils' achievement and standards further. The teaching and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, especially their willingness to take responsibility for helping others within the school and local community. They have excellent attitudes to work which, with their good academic progress, gives them a strong foundation on which to build their future education and employment. The care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding. The high level of care for each individual is very much in line with the school's motto: 'A caring family school'. Pupils have targets which make an excellent contribution to their progress because they are involved in deciding them and in assessing their progress towards them.

The curriculum is good. A broad and rich curriculum with a strong emphasis on art, physical education, music and learning from first-hand experience increases pupils' enjoyment of school. It also makes a strong contribution to their understanding of the importance of respect for different beliefs in a multicultural society.

Leadership and management are good overall. The new leadership team has very quickly turned an underperforming school into a good one. The positive impact of staff who have recently been given leadership responsibilities for the first time, along with their exceptional commitment to further improvement, demonstrates that the school has an outstanding capacity to continue to raise standards. The support, guidance and challenge provided by the governing body make a strong contribution to the school's improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Within this outstanding Foundation Stage children are happy, settled and very purposeful in their learning. Excellent leadership and teaching enable the children to make rapid progress in developing their speaking skills and their ability to learn independently. An outstanding feature of the provision is the considerable learning that takes place in a very well organised, calm and caring atmosphere. The children make very good progress in learning about sounds in letters and words, helping them to lay a strong foundation for the development of their reading skills.

A rich curriculum stimulates the children's curiosity and encourages them to learn by asking questions and finding things out for themselves. For example, children could think of several different ways of finding out what a baby zebra is called. All adults receive very clear guidance for talking to children in a way that encourages them to be inquisitive and to notice interesting things. When children noticed what happened to the cheese they were grating for their pizza, their surprise and wonder demonstrated how much they gained from the experience. As a result of exciting activities like this, the children are keen and confident learners who concentrate hard on their tasks. Their behaviour is excellent and they cooperate very well with each other.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the small proportion of teaching and learning that is not as effective as the best in the school.
- Improve pupils' skills in mathematical investigations and problem-solving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and their standards are above average. When children start school, their skills are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 with the result that their standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Published results from the Key Stage 2 national tests in 2007 show that, by Year 6, pupils make good progress in science and achieve well above average standards. This has consistently been the case for three years. However, during the same period, progress has rarely been better than satisfactory in English and mathematics and standards have not been nearly so high as they are in science.

The new leadership team has identified the reasons for this slower progress in English and mathematics and, in a very short time, has made a good start in eradicating these. As a result, the inspection evidence shows that pupils are now making good progress in these subjects and are on track to achieve targets that will improve standards compared to previous years. The main improvements are in pupils' writing and in the achievement of higher-attaining pupils, both of which are now good. Inspection evidence confirms the school's evaluation that a weakness which still needs to be tackled is pupils' skills in mathematical investigations and problem-solving.

Higher-attaining pupils are now making good progress because teachers have improved their skills in using assessment information to identify those pupils who need more challenge in their work. Pupils reach higher standards in their writing because teachers provide inspiring writing tasks and very good guidance. The personal writing journals used in some classes make an excellent contribution to pupils' progress. Pupils with additional needs, including those with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress because they receive well planned support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils' enjoyment of their education is reflected in their well above average attendance. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding, and this is seen especially in their very high levels of motivation and their excellent teamwork. Pupils have exceptional confidence in talking about their feelings and a very mature attitude to supporting friends who are upset. Some of the older pupils show considerable interest in abstract questions such as 'what is beauty?' Through a wide range of stimulating first-hand experiences, pupils develop an extremely good understanding of their own and other cultures. From this work, they can also talk very prudently about the importance of respecting people with different beliefs.

Pupils have a good understanding of road safety and they feel safe from bullying because they are confident that staff will look after them. They are aware of the benefits of healthy eating and exercise. Pupils demonstrate an outstanding degree of responsibility when they accept jobs such as play leaders and reading buddies. School council members clearly understand the importance of representing the views of their class and they have made a significant contribution to decisions on such matters as the school uniform and motto. Pupils also make a very good contribution to the community outside school through links with local organisations such as the church and the hospice and through support for a number of charities. Pupils' excellent attitudes to work, their skills in taking responsibility and their academic achievements prepare them well for their future education and employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and some aspects are outstanding. The leadership team rigorously identifies and improves areas of weaker teaching. As a result, no teaching is less than satisfactory, which is better than in previous years.

Most teachers use assessment well to plan work that meets the range of needs within their classes. The additional challenge for higher-attaining pupils is a strength. An outstanding aspect of some writing lessons is the involvement of pupils in assessing their own progress to a very clear set of criteria. The pupils' response demonstrates that this makes a very strong contribution to their understanding of how to write in a range of different styles. Teachers enable pupils to develop good skills of learning through discussion and of working collaboratively in groups.

Most lessons have stimulating beginnings and plenty of time is given to pupils to develop their skills in interesting, independent activities. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, the teacher provided some very imaginative games to help pupils to understand a new idea. Where teaching is not so strong, pupils are expected to sit and listen for too long and the majority find it difficult to maintain attention. Teachers have a clear objective for each lesson and most provide activities that help all pupils to achieve it. In a minority of lessons, the activities are not sufficiently linked to the objective and pupils' progress is therefore slower. Most teachers provide pupils with

good guidance on how to meet their objectives, both during lessons and when marking their books.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Teachers consolidate pupils' learning of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology in well planned and interesting activities that link different subjects together. A good example of this was the Year 5 work on making and using programmable robots. The curriculum is broad and rich, particularly in the range of opportunities provided for pupils to develop their skills in art, music and physical education. This range is extended by a good programme of extra-curricular activities.

Teachers enhance pupils' understanding of history by providing good first-hand experiences wherever possible. For example, work on the Second World War included a discussion with a survivor of the Blitz, and residential visits are planned to support learning about Celtic and medieval times. Work in science and physical education makes a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. The school has a good plan for adapting the curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils who are underachieving or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. While there are many strengths in the curriculum, inspection findings agree with the school's self-evaluation that there is insufficient emphasis on the development of pupils' enquiry skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for all pupils. Staff know the pupils well and there is a genuine concern for their well-being. Parents recognise this and their views are summed up by one who quotes their child: 'The school is like a great big family. Everyone cares for each other and when we are sad or hurt, someone will always be there to help you.' Pupils speak highly of the opportunities given to them to discuss their concerns and they appreciate the support they receive. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are fully in place.

The systems to monitor and support pupils who are vulnerable or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding. The school quickly identifies these pupils and the well planned programmes of support enable them to make very good progress. The school is also developing very good methods for identifying pupils who are gifted and talented and for meeting their needs.

The academic guidance for pupils is outstanding and contributes to their improving progress. Teachers use assessment information very effectively to help pupils understand the level at which they are working and to identify the targets they need to set themselves to improve further. The involvement of pupils in this way increases their motivation and their understanding of how to achieve their targets. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly. Where this is most effective, the teachers' comments provide very useful information to pupils on how to improve their work. There are also excellent examples in Year 6 homework books of parents and teachers sharing information and working together to help the pupils to improve their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher, working in a very effective partnership with the assistant headteacher, has developed an excellent commitment in all staff to improve the quality of education in the school. This very evident, shared commitment gives the school an outstanding capacity to continue to improve pupils' standards.

The commitment is seen particularly in the way that staff have willingly accepted leadership responsibilities in the last year, having never had any previously. They are quickly and enthusiastically developing their leadership skills and, within a very short time, they have had a good influence on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Outstanding teachers who have been identified as 'lead learners' make a very strong contribution to improving the quality of writing in all classes. This is now good, whereas it was a weakness in the past. The leadership team is outward looking and works in very good partnership with local authority advisory staff, external support services, a secondary school and local sports clubs to ensure that pupils receive the best quality of education possible.

The senior leadership team has used assessment information effectively to set challenging targets for raising standards over the next three years, especially for higher-attaining pupils. Inspection evidence shows that pupils are making good progress towards meeting the targets for the first year. Self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are not yet fully developed because recent work has focused more on introducing urgently required improvements rapidly. Nevertheless, leaders have a clear understanding of the priorities that need to be tackled to raise standards further and they are doing so effectively.

The governing body has made a strong contribution to the improvement of the school in the last year, especially through the support and guidance they have given in establishing the new leadership team and staffing structure. They are developing good methods for gaining an understanding of the school's strengths and improvement priorities, for example by analysis of assessment data and by discussion with school leaders. They ask the sort of probing questions that helps the school to set good targets and to decide the best actions for achieving them.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	2
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?	2
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 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	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 Gawber Primary School, Barnsley, S75 2RJ

I would like to thank you for the help that you gave to Mrs Ferrie and me when we came to inspect your school. Many of you gave us some very useful information when we talked with you and this helped us to make our judgements. We would like to say a special thank you to the Year 6 pupils. They were sorry that they could not be in school during the inspection because they were on their residential visit to Whitby. However, they wrote us some very interesting letters which told us much about important aspects of their work, such as the reading buddies and the writing journals.

Your school is a good one and in some ways it is outstanding. We saw some excellent work in your Foundation Stage class. Your teachers help all of you to make good progress in your work, especially in your writing. They provide you with many very interesting activities and we were impressed by your art, your singing and all the sports you take part in. The care given to you by all of the staff is outstanding and the way you help each other really lives up to your motto: 'A caring family school'. You also showed us that you know how important it is to respect people with beliefs that are different to yours. Your good progress is helped by your excellent attitudes to work and your enthusiasm to reach your targets in English and mathematics. You are very responsible when you have to work on your own or as part of a group.

Your school has improved considerably in the last year and your governors, headteacher and staff are very keen that it goes on getting better and better. To help with this, we have agreed with them two areas to work on. These are to improve some aspects of teaching and to give you more finding-out tasks and problems to solve in mathematics. We know that you will enjoy solving really challenging mathematical problems, especially if you work as hard on them as you do with your writing.