

Smithy Bridge Foundation Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105847
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	324283
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Joe Peacock

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	454
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Porter
Headteacher	Mrs J George
Date of previous school inspection	3 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bridgenorth Drive Smithy Bridge Littleborough Lancashire OL15 0DY

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2009
Inspection number	324283

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is in a semi-rural village on the edge of the Pennines and is much larger than average. There is provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage with children taught in a Nursery and two Reception classes. Only 3% are from minority ethnic families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. There is a registered before and after-school club with day care provision for 38 three to eight-year-olds. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy School and Healthy Eating awards, Activemark and Basic Skills Primary Quality Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which is providing excellent value for money. The exceptional headteacher has high aspirations and communicates these very effectively. All staff have ownership of the drive towards excellence and give nothing but their best. Senior staff welcome the responsibilities delegated to them and contribute very effectively to the well thought out programme of school improvement. All pupils are exceptionally well provided for in a caring and supportive atmosphere. Parents' very positive responses to the inspection questionnaire confirm their appreciation for the outstanding care, support and guidance for their children. Comments such as, 'my child loves school', reflect this.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their above average attendance, sustained over the past few years, shows their enjoyment of school. Community spirit is strong and all share a pride in their school. Relationships with staff and between pupils are excellent and behaviour is outstanding. Safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils say they feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concerns. The school's strong links with outside agencies ensure that individual needs, such as those of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are extremely well met. Pupils have an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle. They thoroughly enjoy activities such as archery, aerobics and flying Roman style shield kites. All pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education. They gain valuable skills from the outstanding curriculum and from the wide range of lunchtime and after-school activities. The provision for children attending the before and after-school club is also outstanding, reflecting the dedication and commitment of the staff responsible for these popular sessions.

The high expectations of staff, and pupils' excellent attitudes towards their learning, ensure that all make excellent progress and consistently achieve significantly above average standards as they move through the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make outstanding progress because staff plan very effectively to meet their individual needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage provision, judged as excellent in the previous inspection, has been continuously developed and improved since then and is a major strength of the school. Children in Nursery and Reception make outstanding progress in all areas of their learning due to the outstanding quality of teaching and the highly efficient way that provision is managed.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers are supported in lessons by highly skilled and well trained teaching assistants. All have high expectations of pupils who respond by working conscientiously at the challenging and interesting tasks planned for them. Teachers assess pupils' progress in depth and are quick to identify any who are falling behind. Pupils are becoming increasingly adept at accurately assessing their own work and their progress towards individual targets.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is a strong, cohesive community because of the shared commitment to pupils by the happy, caring staff. There are very good links with the community and the teaching of French and German add to pupils' knowledge of European cultures. However, pupils' awareness of the global community is less strong than their understanding of their immediate locality and of cultural diversity within the United Kingdom. Effective delegation leads classroom teachers and all managers to share in the evaluation of school performance and to contribute to improvement. Apt key priorities for improvement have been identified and governors are just as involved as staff in checking on

the progress towards meeting targets. Governance is outstanding. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher together with highly motivated staff and pupils ensure that the school has an excellent capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children enter Nursery with a broad range of skills and abilities which overall, are typical of those expected for their age. They make outstanding progress towards the early learning goals so that when they enter Year 1, almost all have exceeded national expectations. They make excellent progress in all the areas of learning but particularly in their personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy skills. Children's behaviour and their enjoyment of learning are outstanding. This is because the staff offer children exciting activities which really engage their interest. For example, children in the Nursery class eagerly investigated a 'colour table' using kaleidoscopes, magnifiers, colour wheels and fibre optics.

The classrooms and outdoor areas are carefully planned to be stimulating and inviting and resources are used most effectively to promote learning. Teaching is outstanding. Highly effective planning gives equal weighting to the six areas of learning and children in the Reception classes have a daily phonics session which is having a significant impact in raising standards in literacy. Assessment procedures are based on the close observation of children and the information gained is used very well by staff to match new learning to meet children's needs. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely as a highly effective team. Children have excellent relationships with adults and with each other. Welfare requirements are fully met and as a result, all children feel safe and secure. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The manager is constantly striving to improve the already excellent provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable pupils to gain a better understanding of global communities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The excellent atmosphere for learning ensures that pupils make outstanding progress. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and set challenging targets which are invariably met. The transition from Reception to Year 1 is managed efficiently, enabling all to continue enjoying their learning and go on making excellent progress. By the end of Year 2, overall standards are well above average. By Year 6, standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Standards which are significantly above average have been successfully maintained at both key stages over the last four years. The provisional test results for Year 6 pupils in 2008 show a marked improvement over those for 2007, especially in science. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average because of the strength of teaching and the quality of support that these pupils receive in lessons. All of these pupils make outstanding progress by Year 6. Many pupils do especially well in music, which has a high profile in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school provides a warm, supportive and stimulating environment and, consequently, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school. They show great self-motivation and a determination to do well. Their above average attendance reflects their joy of learning and their outstanding work ethic.

A significant strength of the school is the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are reflective and show a genuine concern and care for others. They strive to be valued members of the school, assisting with monitoring discipline at break times and running a very active school council. Pupils enjoy assemblies because there are opportunities for them to participate and reflect.

Pupils' awareness of how to be healthy and keep safe is outstanding. They are very conscious of what it means to live healthily. Those pupils who attend the before and after-school clubs take advantage of and enjoy the healthy breakfasts and snacks provided. Pupils' participation in the activities that are offered outside the classroom and in the local community is very high. They show great initiative and enterprise in the many fundraising activities they support. Pupils leave school with outstanding academic skills and the ability to work cooperatively with others. These prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of their learning and equip them with valuable skills for life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is highly effective and pupils thoroughly enjoying their learning. The quality of teaching and learning is so effective because teachers have very high expectations of their own performance and that of all pupils. The skilled support provided by teaching assistants and pupils' own keenness to learn contribute significantly to ever rising standards. Staff plan meticulously for a range of learners, explain learning objectives clearly and make very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT). Where teaching is good rather than outstanding, teachers do not provide enough opportunities at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on what they have learned or they do not make enough use of interactive whiteboards. Teaching assistants' support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly effective, helping to reduce the numbers of pupils requiring extra help. Relationships between teachers and pupils are a key strength and help learners to grow in confidence and to be positive about their work. Pupils are beginning to competently review their own progress, making them much more aware of how well they have done and how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The highly effective curriculum successfully develops pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and science. The science curriculum is particularly effective, providing outstanding opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experiences by conducting investigations themselves. Year 6 enjoyed mixing and trying to separate solutions, for example. There are frequent visits to places of educational interest, including two residential visits each year. Visitors add further to the extensive range of experiences for pupils. The many and varied clubs during lunchtime and

after school enhance pupils' well-being and enjoyment of learning. In the excellent after-school club, highly qualified staff plan an exciting curriculum, which adds to pupils' learning effectively. Pupils thoroughly enjoy playing and learning together and often do not want to go home. Pupils' personal development is well promoted in assemblies and lessons, giving them the social awareness and confidence needed to act responsibly and to consider others. There is a long history of exceptional curricular provision for music with half of all Key Stage 2 pupils learning to play an instrument. Pupils are proud of their achievements when attending musical events, for example, to sing in the choir or to play in the school band in national competitions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral support is outstanding with staff being fully committed to promoting the welfare and well-being of pupils. All safeguarding procedures are in place and the school has excellent procedures to monitor and promote good attendance. Effective behaviour and anti-bullying policies ensure that pupils' conduct is of the highest standard. The few incidents of challenging behaviour are managed very effectively by the behaviour mentors. The 'special friend' system operated by older pupils effectively supports younger children as they move into Reception from the Nursery.

An overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school and happy with information they receive in weekly newsletters and on the school's website. However, in the inspection questionnaire, a very small number expressed concerns about behaviour and whether their suggestions and opinions are listened to and acted on. These concerns are unfounded because the school has excellent procedures for ensuring the welfare of all pupils and for consulting with parents. Extensive partnerships and links with external agencies ensure that pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are very well supported, enabling all to make outstanding progress. Exceptional arrangements are in place to assess and track pupils' progress and the information gained is used extremely well to set challenging new targets. The assessment information gives teachers another strong indication about the effectiveness of their teaching and quickly identifies any pupil who may need additional support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. Together, they make a highly effective senior leadership team. Their combined skills and expertise are instrumental in helping to create such an outstanding school.

This is a fully inclusive school providing equal opportunities for all. Learning leaders, who are responsible for each key stage, check on pupils' performance rigorously and the challenging targets subsequently set ensure that standards rise year-on-year. Subject leaders demonstrate a strong commitment and responsibility to develop their different subject areas and are constantly seeking ways to improve provision and standards. Relevant priorities for development are included in the carefully constructed school improvement plan.

The school is a cohesive community and is acting as a hub, effectively supporting and contributing to the development of community cohesion locally. Pupils are developing a good awareness and understanding of the cultural diversity. The opportunities for pupils to explore wider global communities are not yet as strong. Virtually all parents are extremely happy and

positive about the school. One summing up the views of many writes, 'my child has really grown in confidence both academically and socially'.

The governors are well informed and equally determined to help bring about school improvement. Their crucial role in questioning, challenging and monitoring the school's performance is carried out to the highest professional standard.

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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?	1
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	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

Quietly contemplate the contents of this letter which I write to you after visiting your excellent school. Year 6, I hope, will see that I have started my sentence with an adverb, just as they were trying to do. I was very impressed with the quality of writing in Year 6. 'Twittering birds giving way to leering crows and ravens' gave an excellent picture in your writing about the gathering storm over Hollingworth Lake, following their visit. All the inspectors really enjoyed the two days we spent in your outstanding school. You are right to be proud of it.

Thank you for being so friendly and polite. I want to say a special thank you to you, your parents and staff for battling through the half metre of snow. It shows why your attendance is better than other schools and how much you enjoy it.

Through your hard work and concentration you achieve high standards in reading, maths and science as well as writing. Last year, they were the highest for a long time. Well done! You are very lucky to have so many interesting things to do in lessons, during lunchtime and after school. I was very impressed with the choir and agree with parents that the brass band is in a league of its own. I agree with you that your school dinners are probably the best in England.

In the Nursery and Reception, I can see why you love school so much. The choice of activities both indoors and outside certainly keeps you busy. It was so good to see all of you getting on so well together. I thought that your behaviour in lessons and around school was excellent.

However, there is one area where some improvement could be made. I have asked your teachers to plan more opportunities for you to gain a better understanding about different world communities.

I wish there had been more time to stay and enjoy all the exciting things you do.

Thank you again for making our visit to your school so memorable.