

**Inspection under Section 28 of the
Education Act 2005**

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Birchgrove Primary School
Birchgrove Road
Cardiff
CF14 1RR**

School Number: 6812011

Date of Inspection: 03 March 2009

by

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Birchgrove Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Birchgrove Primary School took place between 03/03/09 and 05/03/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Gareth Wyn Roberts undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **short** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Birchgrove Primary is a community school for pupils aged 4-11. It is situated north of the centre of the City and County of Cardiff Unitary Authority (UA) and serves the area of Birchgrove and Heath. The school, built towards the end of the 19th century, is supplemented by a modern new hall and several external buildings housing three classes and a special needs room. During the inspection there were 303 pupils on roll. Pupil numbers have fallen by about 30 since the last inspection in 2002. Pupils are taught in eleven classes (two fewer than at the last inspection).
2. The school considers that the residential area from which pupils are drawn is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Twelve point nine per cent of pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals and this is almost double that at the time of the last inspection (7 per cent), but is still below the all-Wales average and local figures.
3. The school describes its intake as covering the full range of ability. Twenty-three pupils (7 per cent) are identified by the school as having some degree of special educational needs (SEN), including four pupils who have statements of educational needs. These figures are similar to those at the last inspection, and lower than local and national figures (about 20 per cent).
4. Since the last inspection the percentage of ethnic minority children in the school has increased significantly from 1 per cent to 20 per cent. Around 13 per cent of pupils speak a language other than English at home and five have English as an additional language. The school had no pupils who were being 'looked after' by a local authority at the time of the inspection. None of the pupils comes from a home where Welsh is the first language. The school was last inspected in March 2003.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's priorities in its current improvement plan for 2008-2009 are:
 - (a) to improve attendance and ensure that pupils attain full-time education in line with Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) targets (95 per cent by 2010);
 - (b) to involve the community in improving the school environment and develop an awareness of sustainable issues;
 - (c) to implement the Disability Access scheme;
 - (d) to raise the standards of attainment of boys' writing throughout the school;
 - (e) to continue preparation for the introduction of the Foundation Phase and to ensure that the school is ready to implement it fully in September 2009;
 - (f) to further develop a learner-centred curriculum with an increased emphasis on skills, and
 - (g) to continue work on the development of key skills.

Summary

6. This is an excellent school with outstanding features in all aspects of its work.

Table of grades awarded

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	1
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

7. The school's judgements in its self-evaluation report agree with the findings of the inspection team in the seven key questions.
8. As the school received a short inspection this time there is no report on standards of achievement in individual subjects.
9. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes.
10. During the period 2006 – 2008, end of key stage teacher assessment results have exceeded both national and local performance in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator. At key stage 1, over this period pupils' attainment has been, in the main, in the best performing 25 percent of schools, which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible to receive school meals.
11. At key stage 2, there has been an improvement year on year in assessment results since 2006. In 2008, pupil attainment was in the best performing 25 percent of schools in all the four indicators used as a basis for comparison.
12. There are outstanding features in the school's results, namely the attainment of pupils with special needs, pupils who are more able and talented and pupils from ethnic minorities.
13. The inspection team evaluated the standards of the reception children in their early key and wider key skills, and at pupils' standards at key stage 1 and key stage 2 in the key skills and the wider key skills across all the subjects. There is a consistency in standards throughout the school within each key skill.

14. Overall, English communication and literacy skills are outstanding. There are outstanding features in speaking, listening and reading and good features in writing. Boys are often more reluctant writers than girls, but when motivated achieve broadly similar standards. Numeracy skills are good across the curriculum and throughout the school. Pupils and children's information and communication technology skills (ICT) have outstanding features.
15. Pupils' bilingual skills have good features which outweigh shortcomings. Pupils can speak Welsh in daily situations but rarely expand on what they say.
16. Pupils of all ages achieve outstanding standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They are aware of their targets and what needs to be done to reach them. Their ability to evaluate their own work is very good.
17. Pupils with additional learning needs make very good progress and achieve their individual targets. Pupils who are 'more able and talented' also achieve very well and make very good progress.
18. Generally boys and girls achieve equally well in class.
19. There are many outstanding features in the children and pupils' personal, social and learning skills. Their behaviour, motivation, concentration and their willingness to work hard are outstanding features. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as are their problem solving skills, their ability to work collaboratively and their ability to improve their own learning. Throughout the school, children and pupils develop a high degree of independence, which is also an outstanding feature. Pupils' creative skills are good as is their knowledge of the '*Cwricwlwm Cymreig*'.
20. Attendance levels, at 94.4 per cent for the previous three terms, are above the averages for primary schools nationally and for similar schools in Wales. All, but a very few, pupils arrive regularly on time at the beginning of the school day.

The quality of education and training

Grades for teaching

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	58%	3%	0	0%

21. These figures compare very favourably with the national averages as published in the HMCI's Annual Report for 2007-8, where the quality of teaching in primary schools is reported to be good or better (grade 2 and grade 1 combined) in 84 per cent of lessons and outstanding in 16 per cent.
22. The quality of teaching throughout the school is consistently good or better.
23. Teachers stimulate and challenge pupils to achieve excellence. Outstanding features of the teaching include high expectations with regard to pupils'

achievements, attitudes and behaviour and thorough subject knowledge and expertise.

24. Good features in teaching include sound classroom management, purposeful questioning, allowing pupils time to think before responding and effective use of support staff. In a small minority of lessons, however, shortcomings include a lack of subject knowledge and class control.
25. The quality of assessment is good, with several outstanding features. The school meets statutory requirements for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievements. The way the school reports to parents about the progress of their children has outstanding features
26. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and meets the needs of all pupils at the school exceptionally well. It is also equally accessible to all pupils. Outstanding features of the provision include planning for the development of pupils' basic and key skills, personal and social education and highly effective partnerships. The school also develops pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural education in an outstanding manner.
27. The school, however, does not provide enough opportunities for work-related education as part of pupils' learning. In addition, the curriculum does not promote Welsh communication and bilingual skills well enough.
28. The overall quality of care, support and guidance is good with many outstanding features. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education has outstanding features. The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle for all pupils.

Leadership and management

29. The head teacher is a very successful leader and manager who has built on strengths already identified in the previous report. She makes an outstanding contribution to the life and success of the school by insisting on continuous improvement.
30. In addition, there are outstanding features in relation to the school's senior and middle management teams.
31. The school has clear values, shared by all, which promote equality and are to be seen in the school's work from day-to-day. Pupils of all abilities, whatever their age, gender, ability or racial background, are treated in the same way and given the same opportunities.
32. The governors are very supportive of the school. They are knowledgeable about the school, act as critical friends to the head and her colleagues, have good links with subjects leaders, monitor the school effectively and ensure that the school conforms to statutory requirements.

33. The school's detailed arrangements for self-evaluation are outstanding. All stakeholders are involved. The outstanding quality of the school's self-evaluation document matches that of the school self-evaluation process as a whole.
34. The deployment of staff, the imaginative adaptation and use of the buildings within the restrictions posed by the site and the careful and effective use of resources are all outstanding features.
35. Good progress has been made in addressing the three key issues identified in the 2003 inspection report.
36. The management of school finance is very effective. The school gives outstanding value for money.

Recommendations

37. In order to improve, the school needs to:
- R1 ensure consistency in the use of incidental Welsh and further develop bilingual teaching across the whole school,* and
 - R2 broaden pupils' awareness of the work-place and further develop provision for work-related education.

* This has been identified as a priority in the school's planning documents.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

38. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches that awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.
39. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and the children are making good progress towards the Foundation Phase outcomes.
40. During the period 2006 – 2008 end of key stage teacher assessment results have exceeded both national and local performance in English, mathematics and science. At key stage 1, pupil attainment has been, in the main, in the best performing 25 percent of schools, which have a similar percentage of pupils eligible to receive school meals. Occasionally, performance has been in the top 50 percent of similar schools, for example in mathematics in 2007 and 2008.
41. At key stage 2, there has been an improvement in assessment results since 2006. In 2008, pupil attainment was in the best performing 25 percent of schools in all the four indicators used as a basis for comparison, namely attaining level 4 or better in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator. In 2007, performance in two indicators (English and the core subject indicator) placed the school in the top 25 percent of schools and the two other indicators (science and mathematics) placed the school in the top 50 percent of schools. In 2006, results in science placed the school below the average for schools with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals and results in mathematics, English and the core subject indicator placed the school in the top 50 percent of schools.
42. There are outstanding features in the school's results, namely the attainment of pupils with special needs, those who are more able and talented and pupils from ethnic minorities.
43. The inspection team evaluated the standards of children under five (the Foundation Phase) in their early key and wider key skills, and pupils' standards in the key skills and the wider key skills across all the subjects at key stage 1 and key stage 2. There is a consistency of standards throughout the school within each key skill.
44. Overall, English communication and literacy skills are good with outstanding features. There are outstanding features in speaking, listening and reading. Pupils speak at length when required, communicate very effectively with their peers in group or pair work and use subject specific terms very well. Pupils read aloud very well, read and enjoy books suitable for their age and find information very quickly. There are good features in writing. Boys are often

more reluctant writers than girls, but when motivated, they achieve broadly similar standards.

45. Numeracy skills are good across the curriculum and throughout the school. Pupils measure well and have good awareness of number, space and data. Pupils and children's ICT skills are good with outstanding features, especially in communicating information and modelling.
46. Pupils' bilingual skills have good features which outweigh shortcomings. Pupils speak Welsh in daily situations, but rarely expand on what they say.
47. Pupils of all ages achieve outstanding standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They are aware of their targets and what needs to be done to reach them. Their ability to evaluate their own work is also very good.
48. Pupils with additional learning needs make very good progress and achieve their individual targets. Pupils who are 'more able and talented' also achieve very well and make very good progress.
49. Both boys and girls usually achieve just as well as each other in class and usually in external assessments. All pupils are making outstanding progress and fulfil their potential for moving to the next stage of learning both within the school and also when transferring from the primary to the secondary sector.
50. Pupils and children are extremely enthusiastic learners who are highly motivated in everything they do. They work very conscientiously in lessons and participate wholeheartedly in activities outside the classroom. Those who are given formal responsibilities, such as school councillors or playground buddies, fulfil their roles with the utmost dedication. Their ability to sustain concentration is impressive and reflects their enthusiasm for the high quality of teaching they receive.
51. Pupils' and children's behaviour is exceptionally good throughout the school day. They go to assembly in total silence and, while there, remain still and attentive, although this does not prevent them from responding and reacting appropriately when called upon to do so. At break times, they play happily with one another and behave very well in lessons, apart from the odd occasion when their enthusiasm gets the better of them. Nearly all pupils relate extremely well to each other and treat adults in the school with the utmost courtesy and respect. They are very comfortable in the presence of visitors and eager to engage them in thoughtful conversation.
52. Attendance levels, at 94.4 per cent for the previous three terms, are above the averages for primary schools nationally and for similar schools in Wales, as determined by the level of free school meals. All, but a very few pupils, arrive regularly on time at the beginning of the school day.
53. Nearly all pupils develop a very high level of confidence in their own ability from a very early age. Most of the teaching they receive encourages them to

think for themselves and they have many opportunities to develop their problem-solving and decision-making skills as well as their ability to work independently, for example in the Key Stage 2 learning area. They acquire highly positive attitudes to learning, which, if maintained, gives them a suitable basis for further education or training and for effective participation in the workplace and the community.

54. All pupils work exceptionally well with one another and demonstrate a mutual respect, which allows them to share each other's views in a highly co-operative environment. They develop personal moral frameworks, based on honesty and fairness, and take responsibility for their own learning.
55. It is clear from what pupils say, and how they react to others, that they see each other as equals in every respect. They are very aware of the diverse nature of their own school and the wider society and, consequently, respect differing religious beliefs and social and cultural traditions.
56. Through the school's many links with the local and wider community, pupils are very well prepared for life in the outside world. However, many pupils are not fully aware of the world of work and its many occupations, each with different requirements in terms of education and expertise.

The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

57. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.
58. The quality of teaching in the 36 lessons observed during the inspection was as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	58%	3%	0	0%

59. These figures compare very favourably with the national averages as published in the HMCI's Annual Report for 2007-8, where the quality of teaching in primary schools is good or better (grade 2) in 84 per cent of lessons and outstanding in 16 per cent.
60. The standard of teaching throughout the school is consistently good or better and often has outstanding features.
61. Teachers stimulate and challenge pupils to achieve excellence in an outstanding way. They plan and provide different stimuli most effectively to capture pupils' interest and to enthuse them. They provide work which is very well matched to pupils' learning needs and they provide a range of suitable extension tasks. All lessons are well paced, and teachers have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. Staff work very effectively as a team.
62. Relationships are outstanding and promote a highly conducive learning environment. Teachers plan very carefully for the effective deployment of teaching assistants and volunteers. They work closely with all support staff, involving them fully in planning in the early years and in key stage 1 and key stage 2 to ensure that they have the maximum impact on pupils' learning. Strategies to promote purposeful independent learning are successfully communicated to pupils, and teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning throughout the school.
63. An outstanding feature is the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and their familiarity with recent developments. Early years' teachers and those in key stage 1, together with teaching assistants, show extremely good knowledge of the principles and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase; this is reflected in the planning, teaching and learning processes. This is matched by the teachers' excellent knowledge and familiarity with recent developments of the 2008 curriculum for key stage 2 and the whole-school approach to the 'skills framework'. The comprehensive, high quality planning by key stage 1 and 2 teachers demonstrates very well their knowledge of National Curriculum

requirements and Curriculum 2008. Lessons are well structured, and lesson learning objectives are shared clearly with pupils.

64. High quality resources are used well to supplement learning, and all staff are skilled in using technology. A good range of teaching methods is used, which secures the active engagement of pupils. For example, teachers use effective questioning techniques, which enable pupils to give extended responses.
65. Teachers are fully committed to equal opportunities and plan meticulously to ensure that all groups of pupils in their care have equal access to all aspects of the life and work of the school.
66. The school meets the English language needs of all pupils particularly well. However, there is inconsistency between classes in the promotion and use of incidental Welsh and bilingualism, and around a half of the classes inspected do not promote the use of Welsh well enough. In the best examples, teachers ensure that pupils increase their proficiency in both languages, for example, in the Year 5 Cardiff Bay project, and in Years 3 and 4 work on the life cycle of frogs.
67. The effectiveness of planning to meet pupils' individual needs is outstanding, and pupils' progress is monitored and reviewed extremely well. The quality of teaching for pupils with additional learning needs, for the more gifted and talented and pupils with English as an additional language, is consistently good or better.
68. Outstanding features of teaching include:
 - high expectations with regard to pupils' achievements, attitudes and behaviour;
 - thorough subject knowledge and expertise;
 - teachers knowing when to intervene, and when to refrain from intervening;
 - teachers stimulating and challenging pupils, and
 - fostering independent learning through ensuring that all pupils take an active role in their learning.
69. Good features of teaching include:
 - sound classroom management;
 - purposeful questioning, allowing pupils time to think before responding;
 - effective use of support staff;
 - clear use of lesson objectives that are shared well with pupils;
 - effective use of partner and group work, and
 - a wide range of approaches and strategies to engage and maintain pupils' interest.
70. In a very small minority of lessons, shortcomings include:
 - a lack of subject knowledge, and
 - a lack of sound class control.

71. Assessment has a high profile in the school, and the quality is good, with several outstanding features. The school meets statutory requirements for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievements. Assessment for learning is used most effectively to inform planning and to set new targets and challenges. A baseline assessment of a child's abilities is made on entry to school, and thereafter assessment of progress is an essential on-going process.
72. Each pupil's progress is monitored closely and information is gathered from a wide range of sources, such as observations, class tests, standardised tests and teacher assessments. Individual records are kept for each child and updated regularly. Up-to-date personal, social and medical records are also kept in personal profiles, and the progress of individuals is tracked electronically most effectively.
73. Analysis of assessment and test data is rigorous and used extremely well to inform teaching and learning and to improve standards. The systematic recording of assessment data is manageable and relevant. The development, updating and moderating of portfolios of pupils' work, in conjunction with other cluster schools, is having a particularly positive effect on teachers' understanding of standards in subjects and helped ensure the accuracy of the school's results.
74. All pupils' understanding of the purpose of assessment is outstanding, and they are fully involved in planning their own progress and improvement and in setting personal targets. In the early years, oral feedback is used most effectively to help children understand the progress they are making, and to discuss the next steps in the learning. In key stages 1 and 2, there are numerous examples of outstanding practices, such as effective marking of work by teachers, pupils' involvement in formulating their own success criteria, target setting, peer assessment, teachers reviewing the way in which they learn, and pupils reflecting on what they have learnt.
75. An outstanding feature of the provision is the way in which the school reports to parents about the progress of their children. Parents value the open door policy, and the system of visiting the school formally twice during the year. They are particularly happy with the open afternoon, when parents visit informally to look at their child's work in classrooms and around the school. Annual reports to parents meet statutory requirements and provide exceedingly detailed information about learners' progress in all curricular areas, as well as valuable comments about personal development and providing guidelines for future progress. Parents are pleased to be given the opportunity to respond orally, or in writing, to reports.
76. Relevant information is transferred to the receiving secondary school, to the Unitary Authority, and to various outside agencies, to ensure continuity in pupils' learning.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

77. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
78. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. It is soundly based on the Foundation Phase Framework, the National Curriculum, Curriculum 2008, the Skills Framework, and the locally defined syllabus for religious education. The school's curricular planning is concerned not only with the content of the curriculum, but also with the development of skills. Outstanding features of the provision include planning for the development of pupils' basic and key and the wider key skills, of problem solving, working with others and improving your own learning, personal and social education and highly effective partnerships.
79. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils exceptionally well, and is equally accessible to all pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those with English as an additional language. In classes where there are pupils from more than one age group, pupils work at their own level, and care is taken to support or extend children where necessary. Also, setting in mathematics ensures that the work is very well matched to meet the needs of individuals. Homework extends curricular experiences appropriately.
80. The curriculum is broad and balanced, giving appropriate time and attention to curriculum areas, enabling subjects to be studied in depth. The school responds very well indeed to pupils' learning needs, including those of more able and talented pupils. The new schemes of work that are being developed progressively over time, and which are based on Curriculum 2008, are of a very good quality. They ensure continuity and progression in learning, building systematically and effectively on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. Short-term planning of lessons and activities is consistent between classes, and identifies the objectives and success criteria to be shared with pupils.
81. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs, and pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes. Indoor and outdoor provision successfully promotes learning, and the school is making excellent progress in implementing the Foundation Phase, not only in reception classes, but also in Year1 and Year 2.
82. The quality of whole-school planning for key skills is outstanding, and opportunities for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are clearly identified in lesson plans. Planning for the development of creative skills, problem solving and thinking skills is also very good indeed.

83. The range of extra-curricular activities provided is good. Many clubs, including sports, computers, singing and craft clubs, are run by teachers and specialists from the community. These activities enrich the quality of pupils' learning, and impact significantly on pupils' personal and social development. The many educational field visits organised by the school add another dimension to children's learning and include visits to historical sites, places of worship and geographical locations. Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn musical instruments, and a residential visit arranged annually for Year 6 pupils, enriches their curriculum.
84. Personal and social education is very well planned and sensitively promoted in the school, with pupils taught from an early age to reflect on their own ideas and value those of others. Planned learning experiences, such as circle time and philosophy sessions, take place in classroom activities, when pupils are encouraged to explore and discuss their feelings in an outstanding fashion and show excellent attitudes towards a wide range of issues.
85. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well integrated into the daily life of the school. Daily collective worship, which conforms to statutory requirements, makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development, and the school succeeds in creating an environment in which self-respect and respect for others is prominent. Teachers provide very good role models, and an extensive programme of visits and visitors enhances the cultural awareness of pupils.
86. Partnerships with parents are an outstanding aspect of school life and a strength of the school. Parents are invited to class assemblies, and the thriving Parent, Teacher and Friends Association is most supportive of the school, and organises many social and fund-raising activities. The quality of information received by parents is very good and includes newsletters, a website and termly letters on topics to be studied. Many parents give valuable classroom support and assist on visits. A home/school agreement is in place.
87. The school's partnership with the community is excellent. The school is proud of its place at the heart of the local community and has valuable links with local churches, shops, community police officers and local charities. Links with other schools and colleges are very good, for example, the school benefits from being in partnership with an initial teacher training institution, and provides work experience placements for students from local schools and colleges. There are very well established links with local secondary schools, with Year 6 pupils spending one afternoon each week being taught a range of subjects in the receiving secondary school.
88. The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is well integrated into all schemes of work and is promoted effectively in subjects. The Welsh heritage and culture are evident throughout the school for example, St David's Day celebrations include a wide range of workshops that focus on various aspects of life in Wales. However, the curriculum does not ensure sufficient continuity and progression of pupils' experiences in Welsh and the development of bilingual skills.

89. The school has not fully developed opportunities for providing work-related education. While it has some informal links with commercial concerns, there are no working relationships with organisations such as the Education Business Partnership. Consequently, teachers do not have the opportunity to undertake placements, which can be used to develop in-class projects and activities and to bring the experiences of the workplace into pupils' learning.
90. The school clearly provides equality of opportunity and access to all its activities both inside and outside the classroom. It challenges, rather than accepts stereotyping, as exemplified in its writing group for boys.
91. The Eco Committee is at the forefront of the school's efforts to promote the importance of sustainable development throughout the school. In co-operation with the Eco Club, it has championed a range of relevant initiatives. For an inner city school, with no grassed area, much has been done to promote a 'green' environment. Shrubs and flowers have been planted in planters around the school, bird feeders and a small pond installed and fruit waste composted. There are recycling bins for a range of items, from paper to ink cartridges, and energy conservation is high on the agenda with pupils very conscious of ensuring lights are not left on unnecessarily. In recognition of its efforts in this area, the school has received bronze and silver Eco Awards and is confident of receiving the prestigious Green Flag in the not too distant future. It is currently in the process of ensuring that education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC) is fully embedded across all the subjects in the curriculum.
92. Opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as problem-solving, decision-making and working with others are outstanding features of the school. Pupils are seen using the appropriate techniques in many lessons and there are several examples of projects specifically designed to utilise them. A particularly good example is the 'Not in my Backyard' project, where pupils in Years 5 and 6 considered changes to improve a small courtyard in the school. They also planned and costed a trip to South Africa within a set budget. As a result, pupils are being provided with very strong foundations for the long-term development of entrepreneurial and life skills essential for their future personal and working lives.
93. The school is providing its pupils with an exceptional foundation for lifelong learning. The experiences they have, through their lessons and extra-curricular activities, make them highly enthusiastic learners which, in turn, motivate them to be adaptable and enterprising in their approach to learning. This is fostered by the excellent link with the main receiving secondary school, whereby Year 6 pupils spend one afternoon a week studying a range of subjects with their future teachers.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

94. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
95. The overall quality of care, support and guidance is good with many outstanding features. The school pays particular attention to pupils' safety and well-being, and very close account is taken of pupils' individual needs, valuing and nurturing each pupil well.
96. Birchgrove Primary is a happy, caring school where pupils are taught the skills required to make informed decisions for themselves, and to enter the wider world equipped with the necessary confidence, knowledge and understanding to make positive contributions to their local and global communities.
97. The school extends the support it gives to pupils to their families also. It works in exceptionally close partnership with parents to support and guide pupils in their learning. Parents are extremely well informed and their views are regularly sought and acted on. The school works very effectively with a range of health care professionals and other external agencies.
98. Pupils' opinions are also considered to be very important and pupil questionnaires and regular discussion all help to gather their views. Pupils say they know to whom they should go for help if they have any problems. The School Council and the Eco Club talk readily and in an articulate manner about the many good opportunities that they have to influence the life and work of the school. They take their roles very seriously, and are very proud of their involvement in the decision-making process. This is an outstanding feature.
99. There are outstanding procedures in place to help pupils to settle well into the school. This is particularly significant for this school as a number of pupils join the school at different stages of their education.
100. Provision for pre-school visits for new reception children is excellent, including exceptionally supportive documentation, several parental questionnaires and an effective 'buddy' system. The school makes every effort to know if parents are happy with arrangements, also if there is anything else it can do for them. Pupils make cakes and provide drinks for the new visitors to make them feel welcome. The induction of pupils who start at times other than reception is equally well planned. These pupils are welcomed by the School Council, given a welcome gift and assigned a 'buddy'.
101. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is exemplary and seen as an integral part of the whole curriculum. It is another outstanding feature. Pupils have regular access to a very good quality programme of work that equips them to develop life skills that will help them to be more effective,

healthy and responsible in society. The school also places much emphasis on pupils' awareness of safety issues.

102. The sex and relationships policy is very well planned to help pupils cope with their physical, emotional, moral and spiritual development. Issues of lifelong learning, sustainable development and global citizenship are also seen as important elements. As a result pupils are confident, with a very good sense of self-worth and knowledge of the world around them. Contributions from the school nurse, fire service, the local police community office and other specialist services are greatly valued.
103. The school is successful in its aim to create a safe, secure and healthy environment, which actively promotes a healthy lifestyle for all pupils. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and effective. Pupils have worked hard, with staff, to introduce strategies such as recycling, filtered drinking water and growing and eating produce from the school garden. The healthy fruit tuck shop is well supported by staff and pupils. Recently the school achieved the healthy school award.
104. The child welfare and protection policy focuses clearly on the collective responsibility of all staff for the care and protection of children at the school, and shows great concern for children's safety and well-being. The head teacher is the designated person and the deputy has also received advanced training and been involved in aspects of this work. Excellent links with outside, supportive agencies are evident and comprehensive advice and training is given to all staff to help them to identify and follow up any incidents and disclosures. This means that any pupils who could be at risk are very carefully monitored and supported.
105. The school has very good arrangements for monitoring the attendance and punctuality of its pupils and for working closely with the very few pupils who give cause for concern in this area. The importance of good attendance is instilled in pupils and their families in the Reception classes and reinforced as they move through the school. Meanwhile, procedures for controlling behaviour are extremely effective, ensuring the outstanding level of behaviour throughout the school. Similarly, the monitoring of pupil performance is of the highest standard. Pupils and their parents are well aware of how well they are progressing as individuals and what their developmental needs are.
106. The quality of provision for pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs is outstanding. This includes pupils with special educational needs, more able pupils, pupils who are learning English as an additional language, and "looked after" pupils. The school systematically, and from a very early age, works hard to diagnose and assess individual needs and implement comprehensive intervention programmes, both through withdrawal, and in class support.
107. Pupils' progress is monitored very closely by the competent special needs co-ordinator and the teacher responsible for inclusion. They work as a cohesive

team and are very sensitive to pupils' needs. The overall quality of liaison between parents, staff and outside agencies is exemplary.

108. Assessment information shows that pupils with additional learning needs not only meet the targets set for them but also most pupils achieve over and above these targets, and at least in line with the achievement of their peers. In addition to the 23 pupils identified on the additional learning needs register, 32 pupils who are not achieving their full potential are also identified and supported, in order to give their learning a boost.
109. Very good support is provided for pupils whose challenging behaviour threatens to impede their own progress and that of others. The school's guiding principle is positive behaviour management and this is a real strength in the provision, helping it to minimise inappropriate behaviour. There have been no exclusions for over 10 years. Each person in the school community is treated fairly, with a mutual trust and respect for all. Certain pupils are targeted for specific social skills training, which has been exceptionally effective in enabling them to build firm relationships in the playground and around the school.
110. The school is an inclusive community where all pupils, regardless of their social, educational, ethnic or linguistic background, are supported and guided to help them work harmoniously together. Staff are positive role models, prepared to update and change the strategies they use with different cohorts in the school, according to need.
111. The "buddy" ethos of the school, along with pupil mentoring for new and difficult pupils, are very successful strategies, ensuring that all pupils conform to the high expectations of the school. This is another outstanding feature of the provision.
112. Gender equality has a high profile in the school. Stereotyping and racism are not tolerated and discussion with pupils indicates they fully understand this. Currently the school is targeting a group of boys to help them overcome writing difficulties. New resources in the ICT suite are specifically used to motivate these boys, and measurable success is already evident.
113. Staff are very responsive to, and sensitive in dealing with, any reported racial or other oppressive incidents. Pupils on the School Council say they are encouraged to help and understand bullies through the "Hand of Courage" approach, which gives other pupils great confidence in dealing with bullying and not accepting it. Bullies are no longer allowed to get away with oppressive behaviour.
114. The detailed action plan for disability has been drawn up in consultation with the local authority and governors. It ensures that pupils are not disadvantaged due to their disability, and that they have full access to the life and work of the school. In the short term, improvements have been very effective in integrating and including wheel chair users.

115. The school recognises and respects diversity in all its forms. The personal and social programme of work ensures pupils gain respect for religious and moral values and tolerance for other faiths and lifestyles. It helps pupils to recognise that each one of us is different and therefore has differing needs. Diversity is celebrated throughout the school with posters, displays, assemblies and charitable contributions. Pupils proudly share their knowledge of each other's background and culture.

Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

116. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
117. The head teacher is a very successful leader and manager who has built on strengths identified in the previous report. She has a very clear vision of the school's values, aims, objectives and priorities, which she successfully communicates to her colleagues, governors and parents and which she combines with an eye for detail and an ability to delegate successfully. She makes an outstanding contribution to the life and success of the school by insisting on continuous improvement.
118. An outstanding feature of the school's leadership is the quality of the school's senior and middle management. The head teacher is very ably assisted by a deputy head teacher and four teachers with posts of responsibility, who have developed very good leadership qualities and who work extremely well with each other and other colleagues. In addition, curriculum leaders in charge of individual subjects undertake their responsibilities very well. The teaching staff, in turn, have gained the trust and confidence of ancillary staff. As a consequence, the school has a very clear sense of purpose, helped significantly by shared values and an ethos of close collaboration and a detailed, common method of working.
119. The school has explicit aims and values that promote equality for all. These values are clearly reflected in the day-to-day work of the school, where children of all abilities, whatever their age, sex or racial background, are treated equally and given the same opportunities.
120. Realistic, but ambitious, targets are set for English, mathematics and science at both key stages. Class teachers are aware of these targets, which they have helped to draw up. Pupils have individual targets, they are very aware of these and know how to meet them.
121. The school improvement plan's main priorities pay good attention to a number of national priorities, including preparing in detail for the new Foundation Phase and National Curriculum 2008, forging community links, practising sustainability and encouraging a healthy lifestyle for pupils. Very good use is made of local partners. Responsibilities are clearly defined in the school improvement plan as are success criteria. Priorities are carefully costed. The school improvement plan is a working document to which all stakeholders have had an opportunity to contribute.
122. Each member of staff has a suitable job description. Schemes to support newly or recently qualified teachers are in place and very effective use is

made of performance management to further both personal and whole-school objectives. Staff attend relevant training, which is readily reflected in the materials and methodology used in the classroom. In addition, there are strong personal and professional support mechanisms within the school to ensure continuing professional development. The school has made suitable plans for ensuring that staff have the requisite non-contact time and this has led to very effective subject planning and the monitoring of subject provision.

123. Day-to-day administration is very good and resources, including financial resources, are very well managed.
124. The governors are very supportive of the school. Many have expertise in relevant fields, which they readily use to help the school. They also have very close links with the community and parents. Governors have a good level of knowledge about almost every aspect of the school's life and monitor the provision carefully. They are able to use this information to take effective and appropriate decisions, such as those regarding staffing, resources and building requirements.
125. They act as critical friends to the head teacher and her colleagues and they make a good contribution to the school's strategic planning. The governing body fulfils its legal and statutory responsibilities well.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

126. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
127. The school's processes for self-evaluation are outstanding. Sources of evidence used include internal and statutory assessment data and regular evaluations based on formal lesson observations and detailed assessments of pupils' work against subject standards.
128. The school has a long established tradition of self-evaluation that was noted in the previous inspection report. The head teacher has ensured its continued effectiveness. Teams, under the direction of a senior leader, take responsibility for areas of the curriculum across the whole school. This ensures continuity between key stages and also a collaborative ethos with staff having a sense of ownership of the self-evaluation process. Consequently, the head teacher and her colleagues have a good idea of the performance of the areas for which they are responsible from formal and informal observations and from detailed knowledge of each pupil's potential based on regular evaluation. They use the knowledge very well both on a day-to-day basis and as a strategic planning tool.

129. The school's self-evaluation report is of outstanding quality, though it is too long. It is based on a detailed school audit. It is very evaluative and based on direct evidence from lesson observations, assessment data and detailed assessments of pupils' work against subject standards. It follows Estyn's seven key questions, gives a grade for each question and draws up a list of priorities for action which are reflected in the school improvement plan. One of its many strengths is the way it distinguishes those features which are outstanding from those which are good. The inspection team agreed with the school's evaluation of its outstanding features. Another is the manner in which responses to matters needing attention, noted in previous evaluations, are tracked and recorded over time.
130. The outstanding quality of the self-evaluation document matches that of the school self-evaluation process as a whole, namely the collaborative process which produced it.
131. All staff are involved in the evaluation process as are pupils, governors and parents. Arrangements to do so are formalised and well known to the participants. The school seeks out and takes good account of the views of pupils, both informally and more formally, in the School Council. In addition, parents' views are canvassed and the governing body takes an active part in self-evaluation. The school makes good use of the educational advisory service to assess provision and also to give an opinion on standards.
132. The school actively uses information from the self-evaluation process to plan for improvement. The school improvement plan is of very good quality and reflects priorities identified in the self-evaluation document. It is a very effective tool. The school also sets challenging quantitative and qualitative targets and priorities.
133. The governing body and the head teacher provide enough resources to meet the priorities and objectives. In addition, there have been improvements and expansion to the buildings and an improvement in resources. Tight assessment procedures and 'targeting' of pupils, as a consequence of pupil and class evaluations, have improved the achievement of individual pupils.
134. The school has responded very well to the three key issues identified in the previous report. The inspection team did not inspect subject standards during this inspection but standards in key stage 2 have improved in geography and physical education, though similar improvement in Welsh (second language) is not so evident. Very good attention has been paid to writing as a key skill, including outstanding strategies to encourage boys who are reluctant learners. In addition, there have been notable improvements in the accommodation.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

135. The findings of the inspection team match the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation report.
136. The school has an appropriate number of qualified and experienced teachers who cover the curriculum extremely effectively. They are very ably supported by the classroom support staff who work very much as a team. They meet together weekly and also have highly effective working relationships with the teachers who involve them in lesson planning and ongoing pupil assessment. The non-teaching support staff also contribute significantly to the day-to-day life of the school which is also making excellent use of its resources for workforce remodelling.
137. Workforce re-modelling has taken place and is effective. The allocation of posts of responsibility has increased accountability and strengthened the school's leadership and management. Teachers receive their allotted preparation, planning and assessment time which they also use effectively to support and monitor their subject commitments in their roles as curriculum leaders. The provision of 'coaches' with specialist skills and who teach the teachers' classes during their planning and assessment time is generally successful.
138. There is a wide range of good quality learning resources across the school. The computer suite is particularly impressive and it is used regularly to support a number of subjects, not only ICT. Teachers and pupils also use the interactive whiteboards in classrooms to good effect. There is also a good range of high quality books, both fiction and non-fiction, which meet the needs of all ages.
139. The school accommodation, a combination of buildings built during the course of three centuries, is in very good overall condition. The internal décor is bright and attractive and supported by a wonderful array of wall displays in the classrooms, corridors and other public areas. The "Horsa Hut", identified as an issue at the last inspection, has been refurbished to the highest standard. It belies the impression normally given by a 'temporary' building and is a wonderful learning environment for pupils in the Foundation Phase. As an inner city school, the site lacks a grassed playing area, but the playground is of a suitable size to play outdoor sports effectively. The lack of any natural green space is compensated for by the introduction of planters around the school and the lower yard is being developed to meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase.
140. The recently built hall is an excellent resource allowing the whole school to assemble comfortably together and providing plenty of space for the teaching of physical education. The way in which the two original halls have been adapted as central learning areas for the classrooms surrounding them is an

outstanding feature of the school. They are vibrant areas providing pupils with the space and resources to carry out independent and group literacy, ICT and investigative activities.

141. The deployment of staff, imaginative adaptation and use of the buildings within the constraints imposed by the site and the careful and effective use of resources are all outstanding features.
142. Governors maintain an excellent overview of the spending plans of the school through their highly committed finance committee. Governors meet with teachers on a regular basis and often attend departmental meetings. They are involved in monitoring the targets identified in the school improvement plan and assist the head teacher in managing the money.
143. The quality of human and material resources supports the high standards pupils achieve. The school's spending decisions are closely linked to the priorities and objectives in the school improvement plan. The school has also been able to make good use of the Unitary Authority contingency fund (to which all schools contribute) to meet emergency spending. This means that the balances held in reserve are within the limits recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government and the audit commission. The head teacher and governing body regularly review and evaluate spending decisions and the management of school finance is very effective. The school gives outstanding value for money because of the outstanding outcomes and the high quality of provision.


School's response to the inspection

The school is extremely pleased with this outstanding report which recognises Birchgrove Primary as an excellent school with outstanding features in all aspects of its work. It reflects the commitment and hard work of every single member of our staff. We are particularly pleased the report recognised:

- There is consistency in standards throughout the school within each key stage.
- Pupils' behaviour, concentration and their willingness to work hard are outstanding features.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as are their problem solving skills, their ability to work collaboratively and their ability to improve their own learning.
- Teachers stimulate and challenge pupils to achieve excellence.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils at the school exceptionally well and is equally accessible to all pupils.
- The school has clear values, shared by all, which promote equality and are to be seen in the school's work from day-today.
- Relationships are outstanding and promote a highly conducive learning environment.
- Partnerships with parents are an outstanding aspect of school life.
- The school's partnership with the community is excellent.
- The school is providing its pupils with an exceptional foundation for lifelong learning.
- The school gives outstanding value for money because of the outstanding outcomes and the high quality of provision.

The governing body will draw up an action plan to respond to the two recommendations made by the inspection team and incorporate it in its programme of continuous improvement for the school.

The head teacher, staff, pupils and governors wish to thank the inspection team for the courtesy and professionalism with which they conducted the inspection.



Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Birchgrove Primary School
School type	Primary inc Foundation Phase
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Address of school	Birchgrove Road, Heath, Cardiff
Postcode	CF14 1RR
Telephone number	02920628204

Head teacher	Mrs Lesley Abbass
Date of appointment	January 2007 (Acting Head from April 2003)
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Graham Hinchey
Registered inspector	Gareth Wyn Roberts
Dates of inspection	3/3/2009-5/3/2009

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	N/A	46	50	37	37	53	34	46	303

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	9	6	12.3

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	27:5
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	N/A
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	27
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of School
Spring 2008	-	89.0	93.3
Summer 2008	-	92.9	94.5
Autumn 2008	-	95.1	94.4

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	12.9%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 1:

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2008			Number of pupils in Y2:		35		
Percentage of pupils at each level							
			D	W	1	2	3
English:	Teacher assessment	School			5.7	74.3	20.0
		National	0.2	3.5	13.8	63.0	19.4
En: reading	Teacher assessment	School			5.7	68.6	25.7
		National	0.2	4.1	14.9	55.2	25.5
En: writing	Teacher assessment	School			5.7	74.3	20.0
		National	0.2	4.8	15.9	67.8	11.3
En: speaking and listening	Teacher assessment	School			2.9	77.1	20.0
		National	0.2	2.4	10.7	62.8	23.8
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School			5.7	60.0	34.3
		National	0.2	2.0	10.9	65.2	21.6
Science	Teacher assessment	School				40.0	60.0
		National	0.2	1.6	8.5	66.3	23.4

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school	94.3%	In Wales	80.7%

D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2008			Number of pupils in Y6		52						
Percentage of pupils at each level											
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School							8.6	53.4	37.9
		National	0.2	0.1		0.5	0.6	3.1	15.6	51.3	28.5
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School							8.6	46.6	41.4*
		National	0.2	0.1		0.5	0.6	2.7	14.7	51.4	29.9
Science	Teacher assessment	School								51.7	48.3
		National	0.2	0.1		0.5	0.5	1.8	11.4	53.9	31.7

* 3.4 per cent gain level 6 in mathematics

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	89.7%	In the school	N/A
In Wales	75.5%	In Wales	N/A

D Pupils who are excepted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Five inspectors, including the school's nominee, spent the equivalent of ten inspection days at the school and met as a team before beginning the inspection. A peer assessor was also present for the three days of the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 36 lessons or parts of sessions;
- registration sessions, assemblies and collective worship, and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team held meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- senior managers, teachers and support and administrative staff, and
- the school council.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- pupils' attitudes and behaviour;
- fifty-four responses to the parents' questionnaire.
- a response by the Unitary Authority;
- documents provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- a wide range of pupils' previous and current work, and
- samples of pupils' reports.

Following the inspection, the team held meetings with senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Gareth Wyn Roberts RGI	Context, key questions 1,5,6,7 and the appendices
Mr Ted Tipper Lay inspector	Contributing to key questions 1,3,4,7
Mrs Zohrah Evans Team Inspector	Key questions 2 and 3
Mrs Kay Andrews Team inspector	Key question 4
Mrs Lesley Abbass school nominee	Contributing to inspection meetings and providing information about the school,
Mrs Sian McGrath peer assessor	Lesson observations, talking to pupils, attendance at meetings

Contractor:

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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, staff and pupils of Birchgrove Primary School, Heath, Cardiff for their co-operation during the inspection.