

Bedwell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117200
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312530
Inspection date	25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Vincent (Acting)
Headteacher	Mrs Judith Moore
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Bedwell Crescent Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 1NJ
Telephone number	01438 351198
Fax number	01438 722740

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage, how effectively the school promotes pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding, the extent to which the quality of teaching and learning is strengthened by the use of targets in lessons and by pupils' understanding of how to move on in their learning. Evidence was collected by observing lessons and the quality of work produced, scrutinising school documentation and records of pupils' achievement and progress, and discussions with pupils, and with staff who have specific responsibilities. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its own evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Bedwell Primary School is an average sized school. It is situated in an area of significant social and economic disadvantage within the town. A higher percentage of pupils than found nationally are eligible for free school meals. Many children start school with levels of skills and knowledge that are below average compared to those expected for their age, especially in terms of their language skills and personal development. The local authority funds a nurture group that supports those pupils who have social, emotional and developmental problems. Although a lower proportion of pupils than nationally has a statement of special educational need, a much higher proportion has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are of White British heritage and their first language is English. A well above average number of pupils join or leave the school at other than expected times. The school has achieved the Nurture Group Quality Mark in 2008. It was awarded Sportsmark in 2007. The school came out of the local authority's Intensive Support Programme in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Its main strength is its development of the whole child. It values and nurtures them all. The secure, supportive and caring environment is fundamental to the satisfactory and accelerating progress that pupils make through the school. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, which one described as 'like a mini-community where everyone knows and looks out for each other.'

The strong leadership of the headteacher is the catalyst for this improving school. Her experience, vision and commitment, along with that of the senior team, are strong factors in the stability and continuity of the school. Her evaluation of most aspects of the school's work is accurate but it is a little generous, for example, in the progress that pupils are making and the quality of teaching and learning, both of which are satisfactory. The focus on raising standards is leading to the development of a number of innovative teaching and learning and curriculum strategies. The 'Big Write', for example, is leading to improvement in some pupils' extended writing. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in science and key subject leaders have become more effective in monitoring learning in their areas. However, the headteacher judges accurately that not all subject leaders have a close enough understanding of the standards in their subjects because they are not yet all monitoring and evaluating pupils' learning thoroughly enough. Governors share the commitment and drive of the headteacher and staff, and despite there not being a full complement, are having a satisfactory impact on the school's performance. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and contribute to its sound capacity to improve.

Pupils really enjoy school life and are happy here. It is a haven for them, somewhere that is safe and a place that offers them numerous exciting learning opportunities. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and behave sensibly and caringly in lessons and around school. They respond to the staff's high expectations and their good modelling of how to treat each other. Older pupils tell of their pleasure in having positions of responsibility, which are in turn adding to their sense of social responsibility. They see the school council as helping the school to 'get even better.' Consistently applied procedures for managing behaviour have led to no exclusions for several years. From the Foundation Stage onwards, clear routines are in place, contributing to pupils' good personal development. Careful planning of the broad and good curriculum provides links to even the youngest children in what they learn and how they should live. Thus, science and design technology (DT) lessons, for example, reinforce the provision of healthy snacks, lunches and the importance of exercise. Imaginative and relevant provision for personal, social and health education means that pupils know how to keep safe and treat each other. All opportunities lead to skills that contribute to pupils' satisfactory preparation for the next stage of their secondary education. Pupils are aware of the hardships of others, which have added to their interest in getting to know a school in Gambia. Through growing linking of subjects, they have a broader knowledge of the circumstances of others, and their cultural development is progressing as it should. Their involvement in the community is quite diverse. They are proud of their sporting successes in local and national competitions, facilitated by the Stevenage sports partnership. Daily school life also aids their good spiritual understanding as well as their strong social and moral development. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and has improved, due to the school's continued efforts.

Efficient procedures to ensure pupils' safety in school are one example of the school's good care, support and guidance. Pastoral guidance is effective because of the high quality help and

support provided by the school. It ensures that pupils get all the help they need to be able to settle to learning. Pupils feel very safe and know who to go to if they are unsure, upset or frightened. They are confident that the few instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. The sterling work of the staff is supported by excellent links with a wide variety of outside agencies, ensuring that pupils receive prompt assistance with particular issues that relate to their social, emotional and learning development. Nurture groups run by school staff help pupils to access learning following a period of support. The headteacher's provision of parent workshops has encouraged the involvement of families in learning and has resulted in additional support for pupils at home. All procedures are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety. This includes child protection. Arrangements for pupils who are joining secondary school result in them being more confident about moving on to their new school. Academic guidance is developing well. More thorough records of pupils' standards are in place. Pupils know their targets and their involvement in setting them is proving a great motivational tool. Teaching assistants offer specific assistance to those who are struggling with aspects of learning. Guidance in lessons for those with particular gifts, as with provision in lessons, is in the early stages.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. None is less than satisfactory and a small amount of teaching is good and better. Overall, the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time, including on the well above average percentage who find learning difficult, is satisfactory. Where there is good teaching, it is accelerating progress. Relationships between staff and pupils show mutual respect, which promotes pupils' sensible behaviour. Learning has a clear focus because pupils know its purpose.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 show satisfactory progress at both expected and higher levels. They remain below average, with some improvement in writing skills, helped by phonics teaching. The standards that pupils achieve by the end of Year 6 vary from year to year, depending on the nature of the cohort. For example, a much higher proportion of pupils at this school than at most others join or leave at other than the expected times. In 2007, Key Stage 2 results in national tests were above average in mathematics and science with pupils making good progress. They were in line with the national average in English where progress was satisfactory. However, standards have reverted to below average this year. The school's information shows satisfactory progress across all year groups currently. Pupils' progress is not always as quick as it could be, including for pupils capable of higher levels. This is due to tasks that do not regularly provide a close enough match to their ability or offer sufficient challenge. Marking, however, is a growing strength because it tells pupils exactly what they have learnt and how to make further progress. Numeracy and literacy skills remain a focus of the good curriculum, with the innovative Bedwell Broadcasting Company strengthening pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils, particularly boys, who sometimes find concentrating in lessons more difficult, are also being motivated by the much improved provision for information and communications technology (ICT) and increasing opportunities to learn for themselves through problem solving. Provision for pupils who find learning hard is good. There is variety in the curriculum, which offers good enhancement and after school activities. These are increasingly promoting creativity, such as dancing and music, as well as fun in learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children settle quickly into school routines, feeling safe and secure in the caring and structured environment. Good relationships between home and school and the welcome and support the

staff offer to parents in guiding and developing their children are key to their positive start to school and learning. They are examples of the satisfactory and improving leadership and management of this stage. Indoor and outdoor activities help children to make sound progress from their starting points. The use of phonics is providing a more secure foundation for developing their literacy skills. Tasks that children can relate to from their own experiences of life stimulate their interest. Daily opportunities are provided to work with others and to develop independence skills. Both promote their good personal development. Teachers are promoting new learning experiences increasingly to children, for example, through investigation of the world around them. Teaching is sound and enables children to make satisfactory progress by the end of the Foundation Stage. However, a lot of children do not achieve all of their early learning goals. This is because there is a lot of ground to make up and tasks do not always offer sufficient challenge to speed up children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable standards to rise further by ensuring that pupils' tasks match regularly the levels at which they are working
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning across subjects and year groups so that all teaching is at least good and promotes good progress.
- Ensure that leaders of all subjects are monitoring and evaluating pupils' learning and the performance of their subjects regularly and accurately so that they know where improvements need to be made in provision.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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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?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bedwell Primary School, Stevenage, SG1 1NJ

I was delighted to spend a day at your school recently. Thank you for your helpfulness and politeness towards me. I enjoyed watching you learn and play and hearing from you about all the activities that take place here. Everything I saw during the day showed me that you like school and are proud to be there. It included your good behaviour and the way you play together sensibly. This letter will tell you what I found out about your school.

Your school is a satisfactory and improving school. You are making sound progress. You like lessons, because you say they are usually interesting and there is a good variety of subjects for you to learn. You also enjoy the wide range of after school activities, which add to your interests. You are pleased to be able to use computers and are learning important skills in the new suite. You get on well with your teachers and this helps you to learn. Your headteacher, who leads the school well, agrees that the tasks you are given are not always at the right level to help you to make progress as quickly as it is possible to. It was great, though, to see that you all know your targets in literacy and numeracy.

The staff care for you well and you feel safe at school. You understand very well how important it is to eat healthily and exercise regularly. I was pleased to see that you like having responsibilities round the school. The younger pupils among you would like to have some more! Children in the younger age groups make the most of their great outdoor learning and play area.

We hope your school will improve further. The staff are going to work on making all lessons as good as the best ones, always giving you work at the right level and checking very thoroughly the standards you are reaching in their subjects. This will result in them knowing what they have to do to improve teaching and learning.

Best wishes for the future.

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector