

Bulwell St Mary's Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	122740
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	380525
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead 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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	313
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Nicolls
Headteacher	Rebecca Meredith (Executive Head)
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2012
School address	Ragdale Road Bulwell Nottingham NG6 8GQ
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock

Additional Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

Lenford White

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 22 lessons taught by 12 teachers, over approximately 11 hours. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation about pupils' achievement, school improvement planning, policies, and examples of pupils' work. They analysed the 44 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most primary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. However, the proportion speaking English as an additional language is increasing. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including pupils who are supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs, is below average.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Since September 2010, the school has been in a partnership with Sneinton Church of England Primary School, which is a National Support School. The two schools share an executive headteacher. They have their own governing body. The inspection focused fully on Bulwell St Mary's Primary and Nursery School, at which the headteacher spends 50% of her time. The head of school and assistant headteacher are based permanently at the school.

The school has recently achieved Healthy Schools status, the Drugs Awareness Award and the Eco-schools Bronze Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not yet good because leaders and managers' roles and responsibilities do not fully support the school's priorities to improve both the quality of teaching and the curriculum. The systems implemented to improve the quality of teaching have not yet had a full impact. However, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well because teaching is consistently good and activities are accurately matched to their needs. Schools whose overall effectiveness is satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, from their individual starting points, throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. By the end of Year 6, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Although some is good, too much is satisfactory and leads to satisfactory progress over time. Interesting activities and questioning that is specific to pupils' needs, accelerate learning. The main barrier to raising attainment is work that is often not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities, resulting in tasks that are too easy or too hard, particularly for pupils capable of achieving higher levels. Sometimes the pace of learning is not brisk enough. Pupils do not always have enough time to practise what they have learnt.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and learn and play cooperatively. The school provides them with a secure, nurturing environment which pupils and their parents and carers value.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the executive headteacher provides strong, focused leadership. School improvement planning prioritises teaching, backed-up by staff's professional development training and their performance management targets. The governing body is very committed but does not find out enough about the school's performance for itself to be able to monitor its progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and raise standards, through teaching that is consistently good, by making sure that:
 - tasks match accurately the levels at which pupils work, particularly those capable of reaching higher levels
 - the pace of learning is always brisk and pupils are given ample time to practise what they have learnt.

- Strengthen and extend the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - restructuring of leaders and managers' roles, responsibilities and accountability matches the school's priorities accurately
 - an exciting and innovative curriculum extends learning and raises attainment in all areas
 - the governing body develops a greater independent knowledge and understanding of the school's performance and needs, and monitors its progress regularly.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children make good progress through Nursery and Reception, from starting points that are mostly below average, particularly in communication and language. The learning areas are full of activities that develop the children's curiosity and imagination. They therefore practise and discover many skills. During the inspection, through taking part in a regal procession, such skills varied from speaking and listening and organising themselves, to using a video-cam. Children make good progress in deciphering groups of words accurately and blending sounds into words. Many confidently count-on into double figures. The children also make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development, as they work alongside each other and practise sharing and negotiating.

Pupils' progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' reading levels are average. They enjoy reading and are developing their understanding of the roles played by characters in a range of texts. However, a few pupils do not sound out groups of letters correctly and are not always corrected. By the end of Year 6, attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics, demonstrating both pupils' satisfactory progress from their starting points and consolidation of their skills and knowledge. Pupils' achievement in writing, while satisfactory, is improving because of the growing opportunities to write at length and for a purpose. Work over time shows their developing creativity as they wrote about the sudden appearance of an alien on the school site.

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All groups of pupils make similar progress, including those known to be eligible for free school meals. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made secure progress in learning how to give directions, aided by the learning assistant's skilful use of a life-like bee. The relatively new and appropriate support for those pupils who speak English as an additional language leads to their quickening skills in recognising simple words and how to spell them. Pupils who are potentially vulnerable due to their circumstances achieve satisfactorily and increasingly securely because they are nurtured by the staff and develop confidence and self-esteem.

Almost all of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaires felt that their children make good progress. In Year 6, for example, they do, because teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding, but over time pupils' progress throughout the school is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from the systematic and daily teaching of letters and sounds. Activities throughout the day reinforce new and prior learning. In Key Stage 1, the strategies that the children learn to help them to read and write in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue but are less consistently used.

Pupils are keen to learn, helped by their positive relationships with staff. They enjoy introductory activities, which enable them to apply specific literacy and numeracy skills to specific challenges. Teachers make the purpose of learning clear. Although teachers use data about the levels at which pupils are working to set activities, the level of challenge is not always accurate. This is particularly so for those pupils capable of reaching higher levels whose work is often too similar to that of other groups of pupils. However, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are challenged very appropriately. In an activity to determine whether they could make water travel further through a range of outdoor challenges, all of the children were encouraged to take their learning as far as they could. Similarly, in good lessons, questioning matches individual pupils' knowledge and encourages them to explore their learning further. This was demonstrated in a Year 6 lesson during which pupils calculated the 'Golden Mean.' Through measuring other pupils' heads and careful questioning by the teacher, pupils remained focused on the intended outcomes and the skills they needed to produce work of a particular level. Questioning does not regularly challenge more-able pupils to deepen and broaden their thinking and learning. It is also sometimes the case for those pupils with disabilities or who have special educational needs but increasingly for such pupils, questioning checks their levels of understanding and probes their readiness for the next steps in learning.

Pupils enjoy and benefit from opportunities to work with other pupils and to discover for themselves. This is a real strength in the best lessons but in others, learning is too directed by the teachers, with a resulting lack of pace. Pupils' presentation of their work is very variable. Marking, though, is another emerging strength, which regularly tells pupils of their achievements and the next steps in learning. Targets are

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used well in some lessons to promote further learning.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is regularly incorporated into teaching. Year 2 pupils, for example, considered the qualities they would expect a friend to show towards them and what religions tell us about how to treat others.

Almost all parents and carers believe that their children are taught well and most pupils agree. Although this is so in some lessons, overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Most pupils and their parents and carers agree. Staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct and attitudes. They are backed-up by a behaviour policy and an ethos that models consideration, care and respect towards others and to which most pupils respond. Records of behaviour confirm this. A small proportion of pupils have behavioural issues which staff manage well. Attendance is improving steadily because of the school's well-considered strategies and is now very close to average.

Pupils are proud that the school entrusts them with responsibilities and is keen to know their views about school improvements. The school council plays a meaningful role in this, including the purchase of play equipment. Consequently, pupils find playtimes more enjoyable.

All pupils say that the school keeps them safe. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree. Although records show there is very little bullying, pupils feel able to confide in the staff, who they say deal with all pupils' worries and issues promptly. They show a growing understanding of why people sometimes treat others unfairly and the different types of prejudice. Teaching about cyber-bullying is constantly revisited and pupils show a secure knowledge of how to keep safe when using the internet.

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher's total over-haul of the school's work has led to much improved procedures and processes. For example, support for those pupils who speak English as an additional language is very appropriately focused on pupils' specific needs. Sharper systems to monitor attendance and targeting of individual pupils have resulted in steadily improving attendance. The detailed and accurate data about the progress of all groups of pupils and the accurate understanding of the quality of teaching, are the starting points for the satisfactory progress of all pupils and improving standards by the end of Year 6. Single year classes and changes in the grouping of key stages are resulting in greater continuity of learning. Specific support is built-in to support those staff striving to strengthen their teaching practices.

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The impact of all of these changes on pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Further improvement is promoted by staff's performance management goals and training opportunities, which centre primarily on the most pressing needs identified by the school. Together, they confirm the school has the capacity for future improvement. Pupils' satisfactory progress, and opportunities for all groups of pupils to be involved in a range of activities, reflects the school's satisfactory promotion of equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination.

Middle leaders strive conscientiously to make an impact on the quality of education. For example, enrichment, such as activities to promote the learning of gifted and talented pupils, is being developed well. However, their roles and responsibilities are not all the best match to the school's needs and their actions are not coordinated sufficiently to bring about uniform improvement across the school. The curriculum, while satisfactory through its breadth of activities, is not focusing consistently on providing exciting, innovative and investigative activities, to help raise attainment. Links between subjects are developing. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, because it is regularly incorporated into learning through texts and topics. The school provides a reasonable range of after-school activities.

The school makes effective use of a range of partnerships. In particular, the leadership strengths at the partner school are shared with St Mary's School staff. Links between home and school are mutually beneficial. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and appreciate that their views are taken into account. Thrice-yearly consultations about their children's progress and workshops to inform them about teaching strategies enable them to better support their children's learning.

Safeguarding arrangements, overseen by the governing body, meet the statutory requirements and ensure pupils are kept safe. Members of the governing body are provided with comprehensive information about the school's performance and show good commitment, but do not yet have sufficient independent knowledge to be able to monitor the school's progress fully.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bulwell St Mary's Primary and Nursery School, Nottingham, NG6 8GQ

We enjoyed our recent visit very much. Thank you for sharing with us your thoughts about your school. They have contributed to the judgements that we have made. You are happy, enjoy learning, behave well and feel safe in school.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. This means that you make satisfactory progress throughout the school. You reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Children in Nursery and Reception make quicker progress because teaching is good. Throughout the rest of the school, teaching is satisfactory overall with some that is good. The staff give you regular opportunities to work together and to take responsibility. In lessons, the teachers are encouraging you more to learn for yourselves and to discuss your learning with other pupils.

The headteacher and the staff are making lots of changes to improve the school. On behalf of the inspection team I have asked the headteacher to make sure that:

- teaching is consistently good, in order to raise standards
- the tasks you are given are at the right level to help you to make the quickest possible progress, including for those of you who can reach higher levels
- there is a brisk pace to learning
- you have lots of time in lessons to practise what you have learnt
- the knowledge and skills that you learn are taught in an exciting way that helps to build your learning
- leaders and managers have roles and responsibilities that will most help you to make quicker progress.

I hope that you will help the staff to improve your education by working very hard and by taking the advice that the staff give you.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Blakelock
Lead Inspector

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