

Bushmead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	132031
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	381438
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Plowman
Headteacher	Linda Young
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
School address	Bushmead Road Eaton Socon St Neots PE19 8BT
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional Inspector

Gillian Scobie

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over seven hours were spent observing teaching and learning in parts of 19 lessons, taught by 10 members of staff. Inspectors held discussions with pupils about their learning and heard pupils read. They met with staff and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data and a range of school records. The inspection team also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. Questionnaires returned by 56 parents and carers were analysed.

Information about the school

Pupil numbers have fallen to below average, although the school is about to begin a period of expansion taking in two classes each year. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is well above average. Their needs are wide ranging. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. The school has achieved Healthy Schools status. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

There is a Children's Centre on the school site, although this provision is inspected separately.

Inspection judgements

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

Key findings

- This is a good school. It has been on a long and successful journey under the strong leadership of the headteacher but has not yet reached its goal of being outstanding. This is because not all teaching is of the highest quality and pupils make only sound progress in the development of their early reading and writing skills.
- The pupils' good and improving achievement is a result of the headteacher's focus on raising the quality of teaching and making the curriculum more interesting. While overall progress is good in reading it is held back because pupils do not readily apply their understanding of letters and sounds when reading and opportunities to develop more advanced reading skills are not always taken by staff.
- The most effective teaching engages the pupils' interests because it is matched well to their particular needs. However, not all lessons are pitched as carefully to build on the next steps in each pupil's learning or to develop independence. Pupils receive very clear feedback on how they are doing and what they should do to improve through effective marking and individual discussions with their teachers about their targets.
- The pupils' behaviour is good and has improved because of clear expectations and consistently implemented rewards and sanctions. Pupils are keen to do their best because it is 'Good to be Green'. Their positive attitudes contribute considerably to their good progress. Pupils report how safe they feel in school.
- The school's recent success is due to the drive and determination of the headteacher and the shared commitment of the staff team to improve their practice. Teaching is led well and performance monitored carefully and teachers work closely to share ideas, although the best classroom practice is not always used as a model for others to emulate and from which to learn.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the teaching of reading, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
 - enabling pupils to apply their understanding of letters and sounds more effectively
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop advanced reading skills.

- Bring all teaching up to the quality of the best by:
 - sharing the good practice within the school more effectively
 - ensuring that teachers plan more carefully how to meet the next steps in learning, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and the more able
 - encouraging greater independence in the pupils.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Attainment is average and rising by the end of Year 6 as reflected in the 2011 test results and the unvalidated results for 2012. Pupils now make good progress in lessons and over their time at the school. This is a view shared by almost all parents and carers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make good progress, particularly through programmes in small groups designed to meet their individual needs. Children have usually entered Reception with skills much lower than those expected for their age, although the current group started from a much stronger base. They make good progress in Reception because teaching is good. In spite of this, attainment has generally been below average by the time they reach Year 1, although the current intake has reached above average levels in almost all areas of their learning.

Pupils learn new mathematical skills at a consistently good pace across the school. They regularly consolidate their understanding by applying these skills when solving problems. Enquiry skills are more securely developed because pupils now undertake many more science investigations than at the last inspection. Pupils also apply their well-developed information and communication technology skills to extend their learning through research, and present their work in a wide variety of interesting styles including producing inventive video clips. Writing creatively is encouraged from an early age. Children in Reception greatly enjoy writing and were absorbed for long periods writing 'zig-zag' books about how to care for pets. Pupils develop and apply their writing skills well at Key Stage 2 across topic themes, such as Year 6 pupils' pieces about the experiences of people during the Second World War or their 'Arctic Adventures'.

Progress has been less strong in the past at Key Stage 1. Although improving, pupils make slower progress here in reading than in the rest of the school. Consequently, attainment in reading has been below average by the end of Year 2. The focus on developing a love of books means attainment in reading rises rapidly at Key Stage 2 and is average by the end of Year 6. Almost all pupils reach nationally expected levels in reading, a level exceeded by an increasing number this year.

Quality of teaching

A well-planned mathematics lesson in Year 5 reflected many of qualities seen in the most effective lessons and supported the views of parents, carers and their children that teaching is good. Pupils worked on a variety of activities pitched at different levels and rose to the teacher's high expectations. The questioning from the teacher and support staff challenged the pupils' thinking and encouraged them to share ideas with each other and to work independently. This is not always the case. In a small minority of lessons, whole-class teaching does not always challenge the more able as teachers do not adapt their teaching in the light of the pupils' progress in learning.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are generally supported well when working closely with the skilled teaching assistants, but their progress is hampered at times when lesson planning does not identify precisely the techniques and resources to maximise their learning. The good teaching seen in Reception was characterised by warm and constructive relationships in a friendly and secure environment. Children were engrossed in the wide range of well-resourced activities supporting their theme of 'caring'. Learning flowed smoothly between inside and outdoors. Adult-led sessions were taught well and all adults were skilled at knowing when best to intervene to move learning forward.

The more effective teachers take every opportunity to stimulate the pupils' imaginations, such as through film and interesting texts. The visit from a theatre company stimulated some very creative writing about *The Wizard of Oz*. Teachers encourage collaboration and team working such as when pupils in Years 3 and 4 prepared a video to send to their link school in France. However, in a small minority of lessons, teachers miss opportunities for developing greater independence and risk-taking.

Individual sessions where pupils develop their understanding of letters and sounds focus closely on the stages of each pupil's learning. Effective programmes help weaker readers to catch up at the start of Key Stage 2. However, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds in reading and to aid the development of their writing. Plenty of opportunities are provided for pupils to read to themselves, but once they become 'free readers' pupils are not always regularly heard reading in school. This holds back the pupils' otherwise good progress at Key Stage 2.

Pupils are generally clear about how well they are doing and where they can improve. Marking in writing is most effective when teachers follow up whether pupils have taken their advice on how to improve their work. This sets up a dialogue between pupil and teacher, complemented by 'learning journey' discussions where targets are reviewed and next steps in learning identified.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils and their parents and carers confirm that the good behaviour seen during the inspection is now the norm for the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, because they accept the school's expectations of them and behaviour

management procedures are implemented consistently by staff. Pupils get on well with each other in lessons and when at play. They treat each other with respect and show great care if someone is feeling unhappy. Responsibilities such as peer mentors or as representatives on the school and eco council are undertaken with pride and contribute significantly to the school's development. Through well-focused support, pupils with behavioural difficulties learn greater self-control enabling them to access lessons and make similar progress to others. The vast majority of pupils say how much they enjoy school, which is reflected in their rapidly improving levels of attendance and punctuality.

Pupils confirm that bullying of any kind is very rare and they had difficulty recalling any incidents they had experienced or heard about. They understand the different forms bullying might take and have full confidence in the headteacher and staff to deal with any incidents should they occur. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly in agreement that their children feel safe in school. This view is confirmed by pupils, who know how to identify and deal with risks and keep themselves safe such as when using the internet.

Leadership and management

The school is well placed to meet its ambitions and to improve further. Attainment is rising across the school as teaching improves. Regular checking on the performance of staff including by analysing assessment data is followed up by individual targets for improvement. Opportunities to work alongside others in the local cluster of schools have enabled teachers to focus successfully on developing a particular aspect of their expertise. However, this has not always been brought back and shared effectively in school, which accounts in part for some of the remaining inconsistencies in teaching.

The governing body supports the headteacher in planning for improvements and regularly checks that the school's priorities are being met. Governors have also ensured that safeguarding procedures are secure and rigorously implemented at all times. The 'Governors' Challenge', where Year 6 pupils work in groups to plan fundraising events and prepare multi-media presentations about their school experiences for parents and carers is a good example of the governing body's involvement in the life of the school. Staff and governors have also worked hard to find ways of building a constructive partnership with parents and carers. Success has been varied, but parents are increasingly supportive of the school and of their children's education.

Joint planning of topic themes with local schools has resulted in the curriculum becoming one of the school's strongest features. Linking learning through topic themes in which pupils are able to decide some of the questions they want to explore, adds interest and has enabled teachers to stimulate writing, particularly for boys. Music has become a central part of school life. The successful choir and entries for the county film festival are two examples of how well the curriculum supports the promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Equal opportunities are promoted well and pupils from different backgrounds and with specific learning needs make equally good progress.

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.



5 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bushmead Primary School, St Neots PE19 8BT

Thank you all for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school, for sharing your views with us and returning the questionnaire. In particular, we would like to thank the Year 5 pupils who showed us around and the Year 6 pupils who came back from their secondary transfer day to talk about their school experiences and all that they will miss when they move on. Inspectors found all of you to be polite and were pleased to see that your behaviour and attendance are improving.

We have judged that Bushmead is a good school and improving in many areas. You are now making good progress because teachers have worked hard to improve their teaching and make your topics more interesting. Everyone tries hard to make sure you are safe in school and that you learn how to look after yourselves. Your positive attitudes to learning play an important part in your good progress.

Inspectors have decided there are two main areas where the school can improve further. In order to achieve this, we have asked the staff to:

- bring all teaching up to the quality of the best so that you can make even more rapid progress
- sharpen the way in which reading is taught across the school so that younger pupils apply their understanding of letters and sounds and provide more opportunities for you to be heard reading in school.

You have an important part to play in this, by continuing to work hard and maintaining recent improvements in your behaviour and attendance.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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