

Buckingham Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110329
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325133
Inspection date	1 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Grainger

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

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	551
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	71
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Morris
Headteacher	Mrs Jan Jones
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	12 October 2005
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Foscot Way Page Hill Buckingham MK18 1TT
Telephone number	01280 812864
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Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the quality of the start given to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- how well the school promotes achievement in writing and mathematics
- pupils' personal development and well-being
- the impact on pupils' progress of leaders and managers at all levels.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's data on pupils' progress; visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work; observation of an assembly; discussions with staff, governors, parents and pupils; and analysis of responses to the parents' questionnaire. 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 of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this large primary school are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little below average. These difficulties cover a wide range and include speech, language and communication difficulties, physical disabilities and moderate learning difficulties. In Year 3, pupils who have attended a separate infant school join this school. Formerly, several other infant and first schools fed into the school and some of the pupils in the older year groups are from these schools.

The school's Early Years Foundation Stage provision includes a Nursery for children from the age of two years. Two-year-olds are privately funded. When children reach their third birthday, they have funded sessions which many parents supplement by buying additional sessions. Children move into the school's Reception-age provision at the start of the school year in which they are five years old and almost all attend full-time. The school also offers care before and after school in term times and full day care during school holidays. Childcare is provided for 51 weeks of each year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. Particularly notable are the excellent curriculum, care, guidance and support and their impact on pupils' personal development and well-being. These strengths in provision contribute hugely to pupils' tremendous enjoyment of school. It is no wonder that the attendance rate is above average. Parents are very pleased with the school. Many told inspectors that they are delighted with the extremely broad and stimulating range of opportunities available to their children. As one observed, reflecting the views of many, 'I continue to be amazed by what the school has to offer and the wonderful scope of new learning opportunities and activities.'

Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points that are collectively a little above the level expected for their age, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 6, standards are consistently well above average in English, mathematics and science. Within the picture of pupils' good progress overall, there is some variation. The school is focusing on raising standards further by taking effective action to improve the progress of groups of pupils who have done relatively less well than others. There are some pupils who make exceptional gains, but there are also some who move on relatively less well. This is indicated, for example, in pupil performance being less good in mathematics than in reading and writing at the end of Year 2. Between the start of Year 3 and the end of Year 6, not all pupils with previously low attainment in mathematics catch up as well as they should.

The school has reorganised how it supports low-attaining pupils and those who have learning difficulties. These changes are helping to accelerate pupils' progress in both English and mathematics. There has been successful intervention this year to speed up the progress in writing of the more able pupils and boys. Approaches to this have been particularly innovative, including opportunities for pupils to tell stories through digital film-making. Pupils' achievements in this project were recognised at an awards ceremony and pupils describe this experience as 'amazing'. The school is continually seeking ways of providing meaningful contexts for writing. As a result, the promotion of writing across the curriculum is good.

Teaching has a good influence on pupils' progress. Across the school, lessons are well organised and teachers tell pupils clearly the purpose of the lesson and each activity. Expectations of pupils are usually very high. However, some parts of lessons, particularly when the class is taught all together, do not focus strongly enough on the next steps different groups need to take in their learning. On occasions, this results in pupils not being fully engaged and attentive. Although teachers are very conscientious in marking pupils' work, there is some inconsistency in the quality of feedback that teachers provide for pupils. Some feedback is of very high quality, guiding pupils to make fast progress, for example in Year 6 in writing, but not all marking is good.

The many and diverse range of activities that make up the curriculum help pupils to develop into sensible and pleasant young people, equipping them very well for their future lives. Pupils learn to work very effectively in teams and to solve problems together through the performing arts and sports. High-quality provision for information and communication technology ensures that pupils become confident and competent in this area. Many visitors, clubs, themed days and weeks, and visits, including opportunities for residential experiences, broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world.

As a result of the significant emphasis the school gives to the development of healthy lifestyles, pupils have a very well-developed understanding of the importance of a good diet. Many opportunities are provided in lessons and outside the school day for pupils to take part in regular exercise and their participation rates are high. Pupils not only feel very safe at school because of the very high-quality pastoral care, but they also know how to stay safe both in school and outside. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are very thorough. An extremely high priority is given to pupils' welfare in school and in the childcare provision. Pupils who have transferred to this school from other schools comment on the very warm welcome provided by pupils and staff. The school works extremely closely with outside agencies to support pupils, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils contribute a great deal to the school. They undertake responsibilities diligently, such as those of school councillors, and older pupils support younger ones extremely well. Pupils are aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and do a huge amount to raise funds for charities. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school, contributing much to the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils know that their views matter to the school. Pupils respect and value diversity. The school promotes community cohesion well. It works very closely with families to meet their needs. This is evident, for example, in family learning opportunities launched this term, in the flexibility of the childcare provision, and the various options available to parents regarding children's Nursery attendance. Parents are very strongly involved in the school.

The school is well led and managed. Many parents comment very positively on the commitment and hard work of the headteacher and staff. There are exceptionally good aspects of leadership and management, as seen in the school's pioneering development of the curriculum and the maintenance of highly effective care for pupils. Self-evaluation is largely accurate. However, there is not rigorous enough analysis of how well the school meets the needs of all groups of pupils in all classes. This means that not all aspects of provision needing improvement are picked up quickly. For example, there are variations in the quality of teaching and in the effectiveness with which high standards in mathematics are promoted in all years and for all groups of pupils. Even so, the school's many strengths, together with the strong teamwork of staff and governors, show that there is good capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The two-year-olds are extremely well cared for. Adults continually support, motivate and stimulate them. As a result, children's understanding and use of language, awareness of the world around them, and physical skills all develop at a rapid pace. Exceptional care is maintained throughout the Nursery and Reception provision. Children are settled, happy and confident. They know exactly what is expected of them and understand the routines very well. Behaviour is of a very high standard. Reception children work and play together very well. By the end of Reception, children have made excellent progress in their personal development.

Children aged three to five make good progress in their learning. Some individual children make excellent progress in particular aspects of their work in Reception, such as in their writing. In the present Reception Year, almost all children are on course to reach the level expected for their age across the areas of learning and a good proportion are on track to exceed the expected

levels. Children do well because teaching and the curriculum are good. Particularly good use is made of the outdoor area.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. There are effective systems for ongoing checking of children's progress. Staff recognise, however, that they do not currently have sufficiently accurate assessment information regarding children's attainment at key points, such as on entry to Reception. Significant development of the provision, particularly the curriculum, has taken place this school year, both in the Nursery and in Reception, and standards now are higher than in recent years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching, including feedback to pupils through marking, focuses strongly on next steps in learning and engages pupils fully.
- More rigorously analyse how well the needs of all groups of pupils are met in each class in order to identify aspects of provision requiring improvement.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Buckingham Primary School, Buckingham, MK18 1TT

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you, watching your lessons and looking at your work. We found out that yours is a good school and that some of the things it does are outstanding.

Your behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. You are very caring of others, particularly in the way those of you who are older look after and help the younger children. You do a good deal to raise money for charities. You get on extremely well with each other and with the adults in school.

You told us that you feel very safe in school. We saw that you are very well looked after. This begins with the two-year-olds in the Nursery and extends throughout the school. You know an incredible amount about how to stay fit and healthy. You are very lucky to have so many opportunities to keep fit and healthy through sports, gymnastics and dance.

You have many more activities in addition to your daily lessons than most primary schools do. You are so fortunate to have three opportunities to go on residential visits, as well as having many other visits, visitors and special days and weeks. The film-making and the awards ceremony sound fantastic.

You make good progress with your work because teaching is good. To help the adults to make the school even better, we have asked them to do these two things.

- Make sure that teaching in all parts of lessons and all marking helps all of you to learn at a good pace and keeps you interested. Sometimes these things are done fantastically well but there are occasions when they could be better.
- Check up more carefully on how well you are being helped to learn in all classes. This should help the school to act even more quickly when some things need improving.

You can help by always doing your best. Thank you once again.

Yours faithfully

Alison Grainger

Lead Inspector