



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Bushmead Primary School

Cambridgeshire Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 15-16 July 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the school	iv
Introduction	1
Main findings	1
Key issues	3
Inspection findings	3
Standards achieved by the pupils	3
The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	5
The quality of education	6
Leadership and management	7
Implementation of the action plan	7
Appendix – Information about the inspection	8

Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Bushmead Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mr P Schneidereit
Address of school:	Bushmead Road Eaton Socon St Neot's PE19 8BT
Telephone:	01480 375375
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body at the above address.
Chair of governors:	Mr J Sinfield
Local education authority area:	Cambridgeshire
Unique reference number:	132031
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr D Jones HMI
Dates of inspection:	15-16 July 2004

Introduction

1. Bushmead Primary School is situated in Eaton Socon, near St Neots, Cambridgeshire. There are 303 pupils on roll, which is above the average size for a primary school. The school is located on the western side of the town, close to the county boundary. Most of the pupils come from the immediate area, which has levels of social and economic disadvantage similar to the national average. The proportion of the pupils eligible for free school meals, 18 per cent, is close to the national average. The proportion of the pupils who are of an ethnic heritage other than white British, 2.3 per cent, is low, the largest groups being from other European backgrounds. The percentage of pupils, 2.7 per cent, who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average at 23.5 per cent and seven pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average.
2. The school was inspected in January 2003. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.
3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of January 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In July 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:
 - the school's results in the 2003 national tests at Key Stage 1 were well below national figures and those for similar schools. The unconfirmed results of the 2004 national tests show considerable improvement. The 2003 results of the national tests for 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science were well below the national figures and those of similar schools. The unconfirmed results of the 2004 Key Stage 2 national tests show a modest improvement in English. When set against their prior attainment, nearly half the Year 6 pupils made above-average progress;
 - the pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress towards the nationally set Early Learning Goals. In the reception class, the pupils' basic number skills are above average. The pupils often speak confidently and most are developing satisfactory skills in communication, language and literacy;
 - standards of attainment in English are rising across the school. The pupils make sound and often good progress in English lessons. The teaching of literacy is systematic and carefully structured. Teachers plan and prepare work

that is suitably matched to the pupils' different needs and ensure that different groups have suitably challenging learning outcomes;

- standards in numeracy lessons are close to those that might be expected for the age of the pupils in Years 1 to 5. Standards in mathematics are below expectations in Year 6. In mathematics, the pupils' estimation and number skills have improved and are appropriate in all year groups. Consistent opportunities for mathematical investigations are helping to develop the pupils' concept of space and shape;
- the pupils made at least satisfactory progress in all lessons; progress was good in 11 lessons. The pupils who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress as a result of improvement in the teaching and effective class-based support. The standards attained and the progress the pupils make have improved steadily during the year;
- the pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Around the school, during break periods and in the lunch hall they were friendly, polite and sensible. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in all lessons, including 17 in which they were good or very good. There is a positive climate for learning in all classes. In all lessons the pupils settled quickly to their work, applied themselves to their learning, showed interest in what they were doing and sustained their concentration well;
- attendance is improving, and at 93.6 per cent for the school year is just below the average for primary schools nationally. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. The school closely monitors the pupils' attendance and patterns of absence. Punctuality is satisfactory;
- the provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory and the pupils' development in these areas is sound and at times good. Assemblies contribute to a sense of community and introduce pupils to a range of moral and cultural issues;
- the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; however there are a few remaining weaknesses. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons; it was good in eight lessons and were very good in three;
- the curriculum meets the requirements to be broad and balanced although there is a significant emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) and for investigative learning are satisfactory and improving. A reliable assessment database has been developed which clearly details the pupils' progress. The marking of the pupils' work is satisfactory; however, limited use is made of guidance related to National Curriculum levels to set targets and to help the pupils improve;
- the leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. A draft school development plan focuses on the management of current initiatives; it lacks the strategic focus to translate evaluation into future action. The capacity of middle managers to plan and evaluate curriculum initiatives is sound but

requires further development. The links with parents and the community are satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory;

- the local education authority (LEA) has provided good support for all of the initiatives set out in the school's action plan. An outstanding practitioner has been seconded to the school as one of the LEA's consultant teachers; she has helped to secure improvements in the quality of education and middle management. An appropriately structured plan to monitor and support the school over the next academic year is in place.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- improve standards in Key Stage 2;
- refine the use of assessment, to develop target setting and to improve the guidance given to pupils;
- increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by refining evaluation and forward planning.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The school's results in the 2003 national tests at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national figures and those for similar schools. The unconfirmed results of the 2004 national tests show considerable improvement. In these tests for seven-year-olds: 78 per cent of pupils achieved at least the expected Level 2 in writing; 80 per cent achieved this level in reading; and 81 per cent did so in mathematics. Some 17 per cent of pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in writing; and 21 per cent attained this level in reading and mathematics. Based on previous national figures, these results are likely to be below the national average but above the results for similar schools. The figures exceed the school's targets: most of the pupils achieved their predicted level, including one third of the pupils who went beyond their targets. In Key Stage 1, standards of attainment in lessons have risen since January 2004 as a direct result of the improvement in teaching.

8. The 2003 results of the national tests for 11-year-olds in English, mathematics and science were well below the national figures and those of similar schools. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher Level 5 in all three subjects was well below the national average. In comparison with schools where the pupils' prior attainment was similar, the proportion of the pupils who attained Level 5 was average in mathematics, below average in English and well below average in science. The unconfirmed results of the 2004 Key Stage 2 national tests reveal a modest improvement in English, but remain below previous national average figures. In English, 60 per cent of pupils reached the expected Level 4, including five per cent who achieved Level 5. In mathematics, 50 per cent of pupils reached the expected level, including ten per cent who achieved Level 5. The results in science were slightly stronger, with 65 per cent reaching the expected Level 4, including five per cent who achieved the higher Level 5. In Key Stage 2, improved teaching and the provision of more

challenging tasks have helped raise standards. When set against their prior attainment, nearly half the Year 6 pupils made above-average progress in Key Stage 2.

9. The pupils in the Foundation Stage make good progress towards the nationally set Early Learning Goals. In the reception class, the pupils' basic number skills are developing well. The pupils often speak confidently and most are developing satisfactory skills in communication, language and literacy; for example, higher achieving pupils who examined mathematical shapes explained that an object with a circular base and an oblong shape was a cylinder.

10. The pupils made at least satisfactory progress in all lessons; progress was good in 11 lessons. Since January 2004 the progress the pupils have made in numeracy and literacy lessons has improved significantly. The standards attained in all subjects and the progress made improved steadily during the year. The pupils who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, as a result of improvement in the teaching and effective class-based support. The few pupils who are learning English as an additional language have quickly developed a basic fluency, through good specialist support provided by the LEA.

11. Standards of attainment in English are rising across the school. The pupils make sound and often good progress in English lessons. The teaching of literacy is systematic and carefully structured. Teachers plan and prepare work that is matched to the pupils' different needs and ensure that different groups are appropriately challenged. In general, the pupils listen carefully and speak with reasonable fluency. In the reception class the pupils used their knowledge of letter sounds to tackle new words and to read with increasing accuracy. Most pupils in Key Stage 1 used sensible strategies for decoding words, and were able to write simple sentences. The higher attaining pupils in Year 2 have a wide vocabulary and write with reasonable fluency. The Year 3 and Year 4 pupils distinguished fact from opinion and confidently expressed their own opinions of books that they had read. Many of them selected powerful words to construct interesting book reviews, and the higher attaining pupils have produced some imaginative and well-structured animal stories of their own. The older pupils are able to adapt their writing for a range of audiences and purposes. The pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 understand how to improve their writing by using compound or complex sentences. However, they were often slow to write at length, and in general there are too few opportunities for extended writing, or for the pupils to consolidate their English skills in other subjects. The content and accuracy of the pupils' written work show improvement, but spelling is often weak.

12. Recent initiatives that have focused on identified areas of weakness have had a positive impact on the pupils' literacy skills. In one Year 3/4 class, for example, the emphasis on handwriting has improved the presentation and the quality of the pupils' work. In addition, the introduction of a more systematic approach to reading in Key Stage 2 has improved the pupils' skills and has increased the numbers who choose to read for pleasure. At the start of the afternoon session, groups in each class follow a well-organised rotation of tasks that include silent reading, guided reading, and exercises, for example on story construction.

13. Standards in numeracy lessons are close to those that might be expected for the age of the pupils in Years 1 to 5. Standards in mathematics are below expectations in Year 6. In mathematics, the pupils' estimation and number skills have improved and are appropriate in

all year groups. The pupils in one Year 3 /4 class who investigated fractions, responded well to the carefully differentiated tasks that explored the equivalence in fractions and related this to decimal notation. Consistent opportunities for mathematical investigations are helping to develop the pupils' mathematical thinking. The lower ability pupils in one Year 5 /6 class worked hard on a demanding task on square numbers and their relationships. The pupils in the Year 5 higher ability group explored the relationships between numerical patterns to predict number sequences. The higher achieving pupils were able to develop algebraic hypotheses.

14. In science, standards of attainment are rising as a result of improved planning. The pupils cover a suitable range of topics as they move through the school, and they understand a range of appropriate scientific terms and processes. In their investigative work on electricity, pupils in one Year 3 /4 class understood the relationship between voltage and demand in a simple circuit; the higher achieving pupils who observed variation in the effectiveness of circuits, reconstructed their system for optimum performance. Pupils in Year 5 /6 classes use scientific vocabulary accurately. The higher achieving pupils gave articulate answers to challenging questions on micro-organisms. NB Standards in ICT are at the level expected for the pupils' ages. The school is beginning to develop the use of computer facilities to enhance learning in most subjects. All the pupils in Key Stage 2 are able to access and manipulate the ICT programs available. The higher achieving pupils give effective guidance to their peers in the use of word processing and spreadsheets.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Around the school, during break periods and in the lunch hall they were friendly, polite and sensible. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in all lessons, including 17 in which they were good or very good. In the whole-school assembly the pupils were orderly and attentive, and sang enthusiastically to make it a joyful occasion. There is a positive climate for learning in all classes. In all lessons the pupils settled quickly to their work, applied themselves to their learning, showed interest in what they were doing and sustained their concentration well. They collaborated productively in pairs and small groups, and opportunities for pupils to work independently are increasing.

16. The school provides the pupils with good support and guidance and promotes good attitudes and behaviour through a range of suitable rewards and sanctions. The pupils respond well to praise and other commendations. The adults in the school present good role models and teachers have a positive approach to managing behaviour management, with emphasis on the pupils making correct choices. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are good. There have been no fixed-term exclusions this year.

17. Attendance is improving; at 93.6 per cent for the school year it is just below the average for primary schools nationally. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. The school closely monitors the pupils' attendance and patterns of absence. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence, and good use is made of an electronic monitoring system to analyse individual attendance. Parents are provided with half-termly details of their child's attendance and patterns of absence are discussed at parents' evenings. Punctuality is satisfactory.

18. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory and the pupils' development in these areas is sound and at times good. Assemblies contribute positively to a sense of community and introduce pupils to a range of moral and cultural issues. The headteacher's lively discourse in assembly encouraged the pupils to reflect on the sources of everyday foods and on global disparities, and also on the profligacy of waste. Most assemblies contain moments of appropriate and well-observed periods of reflection, and meet statutory requirements, but opportunities to contribute to the pupils' spiritual development are sometimes missed. Some good quality displays of pupils' work, including pictures in the style of famous artists, wool winding and African masks, brighten classrooms and public areas of the school. A suitable range of cultural opportunities is derived from the national programmes of study, notably in art, and the school seeks opportunities to extend the pupils' experiences. Recently, for example, pupils were encouraged to sample foodstuffs from different countries and to make a display of their evaluations. In addition, the school enriches the pupils' learning through extracurricular activities, including visiting groups and speakers, and trips. There are a few clubs after school, including drama and music, and a range of sports. The Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to go on a five-day residential visit to Germany.

19. The school has taken positive steps to improve the social climate and relationships. The pupils are routinely encouraged to assume responsibility, for example in the dinner hall, as representatives on the school council, and by contributing in assembly. The school council allows pupils to have a say in the improvement of the school's amenities and environment.

The quality of education

20. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall; however there are a few remaining weaknesses. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons; it was good in eight lessons and very good in three. In the best lessons the strengths of the teaching included: clear instructions and engaging tasks; well-directed and often individually targeted questions; a strong focus on the learning objectives; productive relationships; and a lively teaching style that was often enhanced by good use of kinaesthetic activities. In the strongest lessons, very good use was made of the concluding plenary session: the teachers' very effective use of questions and summaries helped to secure the pupils' newly acquired knowledge. Teaching assistants often gave good support to the individuals and to the groups with whom they worked. In some of the lessons that were satisfactory overall the following weaknesses were apparent: questioning was imprecise; the use of time was not always effective; and the guidance often lacked clarity.

21. A reliable assessment database has been developed, which clearly details the pupils' progress. Class and group targets are used to identify broad areas for improvement over time, but these are underused in lessons and are not systematically reviewed. The marking of the pupils' work is satisfactory and identifies specific strengths; however, limited use is made of guidance related to National Curriculum levels to help the pupils improve. Individual targets are rarely used in marking or to guide the pupils' written work. Assessment and record-keeping in the Foundation Stage are good.

22. The curriculum meets the requirements to be broad and balanced although there is a heavy emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Good support from the LEA's consultants has helped secure the necessary content of work for each subject. Opportunities to use ICT for investigative learning are satisfactory and improving.

23. The school environment is modern, spacious and well maintained. A range of the pupils' work is exhibited in lively displays although literacy is underrepresented. The pupils in the Foundation Stage make good use of the school grounds. Local sports groups share the school's playing fields and an after-school club is well supported.

Leadership and management

24. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and improving. The school's routines, policies and practices have been reviewed. Roles and responsibilities, including those for monitoring and reporting, have been redefined. Systematic monitoring, observations of teaching, and evaluation led by the LEA and senior managers have helped the school move forward. The draft school development plan focuses on the management of current initiatives; it lacks the strategic focus to translate evaluation into future action. A significant effort has been made to develop the school's new assessment database into an effective evaluative tool. The capacity of middle managers to plan and evaluate curriculum initiatives is sound but requires further development. Financial management is satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory: a strategic group of governors takes the lead on all major issues.

25. The LEA has provided good support for all of the initiatives set out in the school's action plan. An outstanding practitioner has been seconded to the school as one of the LEA's consultant teachers; she has helped to secure improvements in the quality of education and middle management by demonstrating self-evaluation and rigorous monitoring procedures. An appropriately structured plan to monitor and support the school over the next academic year is in place.

Implementation of the action plan

26. The inspection report of 2003 required the school to address four key issues. These principally related to: improving teaching and learning; raising standards; improving leadership and management; and improving attendance. Overall, there has been reasonable progress on these key issues, and good progress has been made on matters related to the quality of teaching and learning and improving attendance.

27. Well-targeted monitoring and evaluation have led to considerable improvements in the quality of teaching. The rapid development of a reliable assessment database has provided the basis for effective monitoring of the quality of learning. The focus on the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has been particularly beneficial, helped by extensive support from the LEA. The school's curriculum is based on national requirements, and schemes of work guide the planning in all subjects. The provision for those pupils who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language is satisfactory.

28. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The re-organised governing body is quietly supportive. The school has delegated more responsibility to year team-leaders and their work is now satisfactory. Routines and the organisation of classrooms are thorough. Although the legacy of previously weak teaching is apparent in the work of some groups, the pupils are making satisfactory progress. As a consequence of the school's efforts, the pupils' standards of attainment have risen significantly in Key Stage 1.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in July and December 2003, and in March 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of January 2003.

In July 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Twenty one lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and two registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, representatives of the LEA and the chair of governors, informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of January 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.