



Bushfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110256
LEA Milton Keynes LEA
Inspection number 278392
Inspection dates 11 July 2006 to 12 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mike Thompson AI

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Moon Street
School category	Community		Wolverton
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Milton Keynes MK12 5JG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01908 314876
Number on roll	297	Fax number	01908 314876
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Sue Gatehouse
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	David Rose

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bushfield is a larger than average junior school, located in Wolverton on the outskirts of Milton Keynes. Prior to September 2005, it was a Middle School for pupils aged 8 to 12. In September 2005 it admitted pupils in Year 3 for the first time, in addition to its usual intake of Year 4 pupils.

The home circumstances of pupils are broadly average. They are mainly drawn from two local first schools. Two-thirds are of White British heritage, and the remainder are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these, the largest group is of Pakistani heritage. A few pupils are in the early stages of learning to communicate in English. The headteacher has been in post for five years, but there is a high turnover of teaching staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

The school judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory but, given its significant weaknesses in a number of key areas, the inspection shows it to be inadequate. The school gives unsatisfactory value for money.

Consequently, in accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that, this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

For a number of years, the school has been unable to make inroads into a considerable backlog of underachievement. This is due to inadequate leadership and management at all levels. The school is unable to provide evidence to show that its actions have had a significant impact on achievement and standards. The school knows that standards are unacceptably low and has put in place a raft of initiatives to bring about the improvements needed. However, the impact of previous initiatives was dissipated because of the high turnover of staff, and further staff changes will occur at the end of the term. The school's most successful recent initiative has been to raise standards in reading. While this resulted in some improvement, standards remain unacceptably low and a third of the pupils in Year 6 still do not make enough progress.

The key reason for the low standards and slow progress made by pupils is that teaching is inadequate. There are pockets of good practice, but there is not enough good teaching and too much that is inadequate. In particular, teachers do not generally pitch work at the right level for pupils, and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Previously, there was a lack of detailed and reliable information about precisely what pupils know and can do. New systems have been put into place to remedy this, but these are in the early stages of development and have yet to have any impact on learning.

The most significant achievement of the staff team has been to improve pupils' behaviour and create a positive climate for learning, and this is appreciated by parents, as is the good quality of care that the school gives to pupils.

The school has not made enough progress since its last inspection. The required improvements in English and mathematics highlighted at that time have not been achieved, and standards are now lower than they were.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and ensure that pupils reach their potential.
- Make significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Ensure that teachers have higher expectations of their pupils and provide achievable challenges to pupils of all levels of ability.

- Improve the quality of leadership all levels. Ensure that information from data and monitoring is used rigorously to bring about demonstrable improvements. Ensure that self-evaluation focuses sharply on the impact of initiatives on achievement and standards.
- Make rigorous use of the new systems for checking pupils' progress to set and constantly review challenging targets for pupils to meet.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The school recognises that its pupils are underachieving. This is widespread and most pupils, regardless of ability, gender or ethnicity have not made enough progress in many aspects of their work for a number of years. This is the consequence of low expectations and inadequate checks on their development, which often result in undemanding targets being set for pupils to achieve.

When they enter the school at the start of Year 3, standards are just below average overall. When they leave at the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are consistently well below the national average. This decline occurs because the school is failing to build on pupils' achievements successfully. The significant weaknesses in its assessments of pupils' capabilities have led to lack of challenge in the work set for them. This situation is compounded by a lack of understanding by many teachers of what their pupils could reasonably be expected to achieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils understand how to behave and devise their own classroom 'golden rules'. The vast majority abide by them, though a few occasionally display immature behaviour. Relationships are very good, and pupils from different backgrounds usually work well together in class and play sensibly together in the playground. They show a good understanding of the diversity of cultures within the school and the benefits of living in such a community. Bullying and racism are rare and pupils know that any incidents that occur are dealt with promptly.

Pupils and parents feel very positive about the school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as reflected by their good attendance and high levels of participation in out-of-class activities, especially in sport and music. When asked to describe their thoughts about their first year in school, the response for pupils in Year 3 was, 'Everything is brilliant!' Pupils know how to keep safe, for instance through the input from the local 'Hazard Alley' team, and have good knowledge of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. Pupils know that their views are sought and acted upon, such as when they helped select new playground furniture and markings. They participate well in the local community through musical and charity events. Overall, pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and to become life-long learners. They

develop good personal and social skills, but are held back by their inadequate basic skills in numeracy and literacy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. There is not enough good teaching to make an impact on the pupils' longstanding underachievement and too many instances of unsatisfactory teaching that hinder pupils' progress. The best teaching is seen in Year 3. Here, teachers make very clear to pupils what they want them to learn, and ensure that the work is challenging. As a result, the pupils are well motivated, listen well and try hard. Teaching is not as good in other year groups, especially in Year 4. The school recognises its weaknesses, in particular teachers' low expectations and sometimes insecure subject knowledge. Teachers do not provide consistently achievable challenges for pupils of different levels of ability because their assessment routines are weak. Pupils interviewed said that they often find that their work is too easy. In attempting to raise standards, the school has grouped pupils into 'sets' according to ability in mathematics. However, teachers generally fail to provide work to meet the range of abilities within each set, and too much work is characterised by the use of the same photo-copied worksheets for all pupils. This adversely affects all ability groups, from the most able to those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a broad and balanced range of activities for its pupils, with some strengths. However, day-to-day planning does not contain enough detail about how the diverse needs of pupils are to be met through different levels of challenge and support. This is recognised by management, and initiatives to tackle the issue are included in the school improvement plan. In some year groups, the pupils' learning is enhanced by imaginatively planned topics that provide rich, cross-curricular experiences. For example, a topic about 'The Greeks' for Year 3 pupils was greatly enjoyed and had a very positive impact on their achievement and confidence. The curriculum is enriched by a planned programme of visits to places of interest in the locality and by visitors to the school. In addition, it provides an outstanding quality and quantity of extra-curricular activities that are well attended and appreciated by the pupils. The school is rightly proud of its links with the community, and uses them to good effect to enrich the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is very effective in supporting the social and emotional needs of its pupils through its pastoral care programme. The Breakfast Club, for example, offers a

nutritious and supportive start to the school day. Child Protection procedures are well established and fully understood by all adults in the school. The pupils feel safe and secure in the knowledge that the adults in the school will treat any difficulties they may experience with kindness and sensitivity. The school has recently introduced a system for tracking pupils' progress, but the information gathered is not used effectively to help raise standards. Pupils know their individual targets for improvement, but teachers do not use these effectively in guiding their pupils' learning activities. The parents value the information provided by the school about what their children are doing, and appreciate the schools' efforts to involve them in their children's learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate at all levels. This is because leaders do not monitor and evaluate the work of the school rigorously enough, and their efforts to bring about improvements have been largely ineffective. Consequently, the school does not demonstrate a capacity to improve significantly. To some extent this is the result of a high turnover of teachers, which has led to lack of continuity of subject leadership. There has been some improvement in subject leadership within the past year, notably in mathematics, but the impact of this is yet to be seen in terms of better achievement.

Self-evaluation is ineffective. The senior managers have an understanding of what needs to be done to bring about change, but are not focused sharply enough in their actions. For example, work has been done to improve aspects of teaching, but this has yet to tackle its most significant weaknesses, which is the lack of challenge in the work provided. Leaders at all levels are unable to demonstrate that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustained progress.

The school is good at consulting with pupils and parents, and in responding to their suggestions and concerns. It plays a full part in the life of the local community and its strengths in the personal development and care of pupils are greatly appreciated by parents.

Governors work hard to support the school and know a lot about its strengths. However, they are less well informed about the underachievement of pupils and the reasons for this. As a result, they do not properly hold the school to account for its actions.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school, I would like to tell you what we think about how well you are getting on and how well your school is helping you to learn.

There are a number of things that we like about your school. We think that most of you are well behaved and that you get on well with one another. We felt very welcome, because everyone at the school is friendly. We also liked all of the extra activities that are provided for you, from the Breakfast Club to the after school clubs that you enjoy going to. All of the adults in your school take good care of you. However, there are a lot of things that your school needs to do. You need to do better in your work. All the people who run your school know this, but in the past they have not managed to help you do as well as you should. So now, they need to make sure that their plans are properly carried out. We would like to see your teachers make you think harder about your work, because quite a few of you told us that it is often too easy. Teachers also need to check far more closely on how well you are getting on.

Overall, your school did not do well in its inspection, and needs a lot of extra help in future to help make sure that it becomes good at making things better for you.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Thompson

Lead inspector