



Bowmansgreen Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117187
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280008
Inspection dates 13 July 2006 to 14 July 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Mike Kell AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Telford Road
School category	Community		AL2 1PH
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727 767772
Number on roll	354	Fax number	01727 767770
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Geoff Gowler
Date of previous inspection	11 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Moira White

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 13 July 2006 - 14 July 2006	Inspection number 280008
-----------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bowmansgreen is a larger than average primary school. There are approximately equal numbers of pupils in each year group. Only a few pupils live outside London Colney. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average. The percentage whose first language is not English is just below the average found in primary schools across the country. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties or disabilities, including a proportion with statements of special educational need. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly typical. Children enter the Reception classes with levels of attainment slightly below average. In January 2006 the school developed a wider role within the St Albans and Harpenden locality when it became a primary support base. This is an area resource and has been established as part of the local authority's behaviour strategy. A base class has been established for up to six Key Stage 2 pupils from local schools, including Bowmansgreen, who have a statement of special educational need and who exhibit particularly challenging behaviour. Staff from the base also provide outreach support for staff and up to six primary-aged pupils in neighbouring schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

School leaders are correct in assessing that the school's effectiveness is satisfactory. There has been relatively high staff turnover at all levels. Stability in the management team has only been established fairly recently, following a lengthy period with no substantive headteacher in post. The current headteacher took up post in April 2005 and there evidence shows that there are indications that she has a very strong capacity to lead the school towards improving standards. Staff and governors are well placed to support her. Currently, the school provides satisfactory value for money. Children in the Reception classes benefit from a good quality education. They are provided with an interesting range of learning opportunities, are taught well, make good progress and reach the expected standards. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught satisfactorily. Their achievements are adequate and they attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. However, the most capable pupils are not always challenged and extended as much as they could be, particularly in writing throughout the school and in mathematics and science in years 3 to 6. This is due to a combination of teachers' limited expectations, a lack of clarity in individual target setting and marking that is too superficial. Consequently, the proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels at the end of Years 2 and 6 are below the national averages. Pupils' personal development is promoted well. There is good provision for promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has had little success in reducing pupils' absence which is now slightly above the national average. The school is a caring and fully inclusive community. There are good levels of guidance and support, and staff from the support base contribute to this especially in terms of helping other staff to manage the behaviour of the most challenging pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Reduce the levels of authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Raise the percentage of pupils who achieve Level 3 in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Increase the number of pupils who achieve Level 5 in writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.
- Ensure that pupils know how to improve their work through more informative marking and clearer targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter the school with levels of attainment just below those expected of four year olds. They make good progress in Reception. Consequently they reach a level that is average for their age by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. In 2005 pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics was below national expectations, but they are currently in line with national figures. There have also been impressive improvements in the percentage of pupils who gain Level 3 in mathematics and reading. The proportion that attain this level in writing remain well below the national level. Key Stage 2 pupils' achievements

are adequate, including those who have learning difficulties. Standards are broadly in line with national averages in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. However, the most capable pupils are not extended as much as they could be. Consequently, the percentage that attains level 5 in mathematics and science is much lower than national levels. A higher than average percentage of pupils attains level 5 in English, but their performance in reading conceals their relative underperformance in writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school and generally show positive attitudes and behave satisfactorily. They work well together in lessons. The challenging behaviour of some pupils does cause disturbance but staff manage these situations efficiently. Incidents of bullying are rare and when they do occur they are resolved quickly. Pupils are helped to settle when they join the school, and they feel that there is always someone they can speak to if they have concerns. Attendance has declined steadily from 2003 and is now slightly below the national average. The school has had only limited success in reversing this decline. Authorised and unauthorised absences are above the national average, but unauthorised is particularly high at approximately three times the national level. The school has Healthy School status; pupils know how important it is to eat healthily and exercise regularly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They show a good awareness of cultural diversity both within school and in society outside. Pupils have a strong voice in the running of the school through the school council. They are also able to contribute to the community through their involvement in the greatly-appreciated buddy system. Pupils develop a wider perspective through their involvement in activities such as raising money for vulnerable people in poorer countries. There is satisfactory provision for helping pupils to achieve the skills necessary for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils are taught satisfactorily. Staff develop good relationships with their pupils and generally manage them efficiently. Children in the Reception classes learn well. Their teachers have high expectations and plan effectively. Activities encourage children's personal development and promote key communication and numeracy skills alongside extending their achievements in specific areas of learning. Similarly effective planning has been introduced by teachers in Year 1, and this has eased the transition from one stage to the next. Most teachers use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking and to encourage their speaking and listening skills. Recently improved assessment systems help staff to recognise what pupils have achieved and the progress they have made. This information is used effectively to target additional support for those pupils who find learning difficult. Teaching assistants are effective in providing this support.

Assessment information is not used so effectively to meet the learning needs of the most capable pupils. Their work is not always sufficiently challenging and expectations of them are not always high enough. Inconsistent practice in the setting of individual English and mathematics targets results in misunderstanding amongst pupils. Some confuse their personal targets with the learning objectives of lessons. Also, marking is not always helpful in showing pupils how to improve the quality of their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum has improved recently because of improvements in the accommodation and resources. The computer suite, library and outdoor play area for the Reception children are important developments. Children in the Reception classes have a good range of learning opportunities. Work is planned carefully to enhance their communication and personal skills and to develop their attitudes to learning. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 follow a satisfactory curriculum. Information and communication technology is being used more effectively than in the past and the curriculum is becoming more interesting, but the needs of the most capable pupils are not yet being met fully. Good links with secondary school colleagues help to develop the curriculum, such as providing French for older pupils. Recent improvements in personal and social education are proving successful as pupils learn, for example, about how to deal with change. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visitors and educational visits. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to pursue existing interests and to develop new ones.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care and support. It makes appropriate arrangements to ensure the safety of its pupils through its child protection arrangements, vetting procedures for prospective staff and comprehensive health and safety procedures. Staff and governors are fully committed to the principles of inclusion, under the effective leadership of the inclusion manager. Consequently, pupils with learning difficulties, including those with a statement of special educational need, looked-after children and those from minority ethnic groups are included fully in everything that the school has to offer. Although personal care, guidance and support are good, the use of assessment and target setting is not sharp enough to ensure all pupils have suitably challenging work. The school staff work well with parents and colleagues from outside school to try to ensure that they are meeting the academic and personal needs of their pupils. These include social services departments, local authority specialist teachers and support staff and police officers. Staff in the support base make a strong contribution to supporting the school's work in managing the behaviour of its most challenging pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

An overall judgement of satisfactory leadership and management conceals the very positive influence of the headteacher. In the two years or so before she took up post there had been a great deal of slippage in many aspects of the school's work. This was because of the long-standing illness of the previous headteacher and the long period of time without a substantive headteacher. Pupils' attendance, punctuality, behaviour and attitudes had all begun to show signs of deterioration. Staff were working without clear leadership and effective management was absent. Consequently, standards were slipping. Staff, parents and governors acknowledge the significant changes that the headteacher has begun to bring about in a relatively short time. It is too early to judge the full extent of the impact she is having, but the early signs are extremely encouraging. She has orchestrated a thorough audit of the school's work. Staff, governors and parents have all been consulted and views condensed into appropriate priorities that are articulated in an effective school action plan. Expectations have been raised. Management systems have either been refined, for instance assessment procedures, and re-established, such as teachers' performance management. The school is entitled to feel optimistic about the future. The headteacher has the capacity to lead and oversee the school's evolution. The way the governing body operates has been streamlined and it now fulfils its duties well. It is well placed to support change. Parents are supportive. The deputy headteacher's roles and responsibilities are being extended to focus on raising the quality of education. The subject leaders of English, mathematics and science are recent appointments. They are enthusiastic but are at an early stage of making a real impact in terms of raising standards.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	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	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	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?	3	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?	2	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave the inspection team when we visited your school last term. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking with you. On behalf of the team, I am writing to let you know what we thought about your school. The staff look after you well and make sure that you are safe in school and when you go out on the good range of educational visits that are arranged for you. The staff are very keen to help you develop as young people. The school is successful in this and provides new activities for you to experience. The staff organise a very good variety of clubs for you to join. Most of you go to school each day, work hard and get on well together. Your teachers work hard at preparing lessons that are enjoyable and some teaching is really very good. You learn very well in these lessons. At other times, some of you are not given work that challenges you enough. We talked to the staff about how they can try and make sure that all of you achieve as well as you can by giving you some of you harder work that really makes you think. We have suggested that the school makes sure that you really understand the targets that your teachers set for you in English and mathematics. We also think that teachers' marking should let you know more clearly what you need to do to improve your work. There are things that you can do too to make sure that all of you achieve as well as you can. A few of you do not go to school as often as you should, and some of you do not listen and concentrate as well as you could. The bad behaviour of a few of you sometimes stops others learning. A number of you said that the school was now better than it was last year. We agree with you that Mrs White has made a big difference since she joined the school. We are confident that she will be able to work with the whole staff team, governors, your parents and you to make Bowmansgreen an even better school. We wish you luck and thank you once again.