



Belswains Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117365
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280057
Inspection dates 16 May 2006 to 17 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. David Jones LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Barnfield
School category	Community		HP3 9QJ
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01442 264324
Number on roll	211	Fax number	01442 260137
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Neil Williams
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Mrs. Jill Atkins

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 16 May 2006 - 17 May 2006	Inspection number 280057
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Belswains Primary is situated on the southern side of Hemel Hempstead. The pupils live locally and come from a wide range of social backgrounds. The school is similar in size to other primary schools. An average proportion of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a below average proportion has English as an additional language. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is below average and fluctuates significantly. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. The mobility of the school population is above average, noticeably so in Years 4-6. Belswains achieved the Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People status in 2003. In March 2006 the school was awarded the Naacemmark for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) developments. The school enjoys a good reputation in the local community.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, although the school's view is more modest than the judgements given by the inspectors in this report. Self-evaluation is an excellent ongoing process that involves all staff. The school has correctly identified the aspects of provision which require further development, for example, the need to provide consistent support to pupils with below average literacy skills. Standards of attainment are below those found nationally but pupils make good progress. The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and children make good progress. The relationships between pupils and with adults in the school are excellent. The care, guidance and support provided for the pupils are outstanding. Consequently, their personal development is outstanding and their behaviour, excellent. It is clearly evident that the school's ethos of 'every child matters' was the dominant feature of each school day long before such aspirations were developed into legislation. Most pupils are happy to come to school. They enjoy their lessons, feel secure and display very good attitudes to learning. The poor attendance of a very small number of pupils needs to be resolved. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The quality of teaching is outstanding as a result of excellent staff development. Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher and senior staff have raised achievement and provided outstanding support for all learners. Governance is good and valued by the staff. The learning environment is very good. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection and gives good value for money. The school's capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to develop the pupils' literacy skills. - Seek the support of the local authority in dealing more firmly with the poor attendance of a small number of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry is below average. Pupils in the Foundation Stage generally make good progress notably in mathematical development. In Key Stage 1 progress is good and pupils' standards of reading and mathematics are close to what might be expected for their age, although writing is below average. The 2005 Key Stage 2 National Tests results in English and science were below the national average but those in mathematics were above the national figures. Pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics. Targets for 2005 were met and those for 2006 are appropriately demanding. Pupil mobility is well above average, notably in Years 4, 5 and 6 as many families move away from the area. As a result only half of the pupils who took part in the national test for eleven- year- olds had attended the school during Year 2. The pupils' limited language skills are evident in all year groups. Staff continually seek to develop all aspects of pupils' literacy. In lessons, progress is good because teachers make the learning

objectives clear at the outset and provide tasks well matched to the pupils' learning needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school provides a calm, nurturing environment where children are at the centre of all that takes place. As they move up through the school pupils develop into socially aware and increasingly responsible members of the community. They speak highly of their school and their positive attitudes to learning go hand in hand with their outstanding behaviour. Adults provide very good examples of how to live and work as a team. As a result, pupils quickly develop a strong sense of right from wrong, cooperate well and are increasingly considerate towards others. In the playground Year 6 pupils 'buddy' younger children who may need support. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Musical and sporting activities provide good opportunities for health and social development. Theme days such as the 'Passport to the World' help to ensure that pupils develop an awareness and understanding of other countries, cultures and faiths. Spiritual development is well supported and assemblies provide opportunities for reflection. Pupils understand why eating fresh fruit is important to their health and how to use equipment safely. Links with local businesses and other groups are strong. The school is involved in recycling and has worked on the renovation of a local canal bridge. Charitable fundraising helps to develop pupils' understanding of economic well-being. Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory. The school is aware that it needs to work with a small number of parents whose children do not attend regularly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching is outstanding. In the best lessons, planning is detailed and work builds effectively on what the pupils already know and understand. Teachers have high expectations about what the pupils should achieve. Probing and challenging questions are used very well to gauge the pupils' understanding and to increase the pace of the lessons. Staff make good use of the new interactive whiteboards to stimulate discussion and summarise learning. Tasks have a vibrancy that captures the pupils' interest. The organisation of the classes often allows pupils to work with others. The teaching assistants make an important contribution in many of the lessons. They are particularly well briefed, work well alongside the teachers and give effective, well-targeted help to specific groups of pupils. Marking and assessment procedures are good and applied consistently. The school has effective systems which track the progress of individuals and groups as they move through the school. Assessment information is used very effectively to inform learning, guide pupils' academic development and monitor pupil progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Nursery and Reception classes provide rich learning opportunities where children can choose activities for themselves as well as being guided by staff. Regular monitoring and accurate analysis of the impact of the curriculum refines the learning opportunities for particular groups of pupils. The school rightly regards pupils' access to learning as good. Good support is provided to pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English. Theme days and educational visits enhance pupils' learning as do residential visits to places such as Slimbridge Wildlife Trust.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care and support provided for pupils are outstanding. The school's policies and procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and security are robust. Teachers pay particular attention to the pupils' well-being. The school's ethos ensures pupils are centre stage. The high quality care, guidance and support allow them to grow in confidence, develop as independent learners and make good progress. The strong link between the assessment of individual's needs and the planning for their learning helps to ensure that vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and supported. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well cared for and make good progress. The school council plays an important part in the life of the school acting as a forum for pupils' views and an instigator of ideas such as the development of the playground. The school works well in partnership with other agencies to help ensure pupils learn and make good progress. Parents are impressed with the quality of information given at parents' evenings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The ethos of care, guidance and support is of the highest order. The headteacher has a clear vision and direction for the school which have been communicated and shared effectively with others. Self-evaluation is accurate and broadly based. There is a consistent drive to raise standards and to make the school the first choice in the community. The governing body share this vision and are supportive and knowledgeable. There is a committed and enthusiastic senior management team; strategic planning is of high quality. The school's links with the community and other educational institutions are good. Curriculum leadership and planning are notable strengths that along with the use of assessment provide a secure methodological context. Excellent coaching and developmental strategies have helped to produce a number of talented teachers. The leadership and management of inclusion and the Foundation Stage are excellent. The school runs smoothly because roles and responsibilities are clear. Staff and pupils know what is expected of them and are confident that they will be supported and encouraged to give of their best. The

monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of provision are robust, inclusive and successful. The headteacher retires at the end of the academic year having provided exceptional service to the school. The governing body have appointed an experienced and successful headteacher who will take up her responsibilities in September 2006.

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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?	1	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	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	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

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to everyone for being so nice to us when we visited your school recently. I know you like coming to school and you think it is a very good place to learn, and I agree. These are the things I liked about your school: You all behave really well and I like the way you look after each other. The art work I saw around the school was impressive. Your teachers plan very interesting things for you to do in lessons. All the people working at your school really care about you. They work very hard to keep you safe and help you get better at your work. You are working hard in lessons, but many of you need to read more as this will help you with your writing. Many of your parents wrote and said how much they liked your school. Please thank them for me. I hope to meet you all again one day.