



Bexton Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111232
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288897
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Madeley

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Blackhill Lane
School category	Community		Knutsford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cheshire WA16 9DB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01565 632816
Number on roll (school)	435	Fax number	01565 634412
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Cllr A Ranfield
		Headteacher	Mr Howard Torson
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The children of this larger than average school are predominantly of White British heritage. About half of them come from nearby owner-occupied housing. The parents of the other half have chosen to send their child to this school from further away. The school has a lower than average percentage of children eligible for free school meals. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has two additional classes for children with speech and language difficulties, and one class for children with moderate learning difficulties. Because of this extra provision, the percentage of children with statements of additional need is exceptionally high. There has been a higher than average turnover of staff, including the recent retirement of the headteacher, in recent years. The new senior management team, led by an acting headteacher, has been in place since September 2006.

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 which gives good value for money. The inspection agrees with the school's overall view of itself. Management has established very effective links with parents, support agencies, pre-school and local high school, which all support children's learning. For example, the support agencies provide expert help in identifying children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Since the last inspection it has maintained well above average standards in English, mathematics and science, as well as in children's personal development and in spite of high staff turnover. The acting headteacher and the newly appointed senior management team are at a transitional stage in the development of the school. Their contribution to the promotion of a high quality of care and education for the children is good. They have quickly developed a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. However, they do not make full use of the information gained from this checking of provision. For example, the progress of groups of children has not been fully identified and discussed with the governors. Governance is satisfactory. Governors support the school well but have yet to fully develop their role as a 'critical friend'. As a consequence, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Children start the Reception year with attainments which are above national expectations. Good provision in the Foundation Stage helps these generally confident and able children make good progress across all six areas of learning. Children achieve well in Years 1 to 6 because teaching is good. In the national tests, Year 6 children usually reach well above average results, though this can vary from year to year because of the exceptionally high numbers of children with statements of additional need. In lessons, standards are well above average. Good teaching gives children the confidence to speak to the class, or to an audience in the high quality drama performances. Effective questioning probes children's understanding and they respond exceptionally well, frequently using a very wide vocabulary. By way of contrast, teachers do not consistently tell children what they will learn in a lesson or ask them how well they have learned at the end. As a consequence, teachers do not always match tasks to the needs of individual children, particularly in years 3 to 6.

The good curriculum for English, particularly reading, where parents play a vital role, mathematics and science helps children do well in these key areas. Children develop their basic skills by using them consistently well in other subjects. The quality of children's art work displayed around the school is exceptional. Clubs are well attended and children both enjoy, and learn from, the educational visits. Very good provision for health education and sport encourages children to stay fit and well. Children's personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent, they are well mannered at meal times and they look after each other very well. They have an exceptionally good awareness of the need for healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. For instance, they know simple ways to stay safe, like always telling a parent where they are, crossing the road, or using the Internet. Parents feel that their children are well looked after in school. The quality of provision in the additional classes is very good and enables the children who attend them to make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of the information gathered to inform forward planning and target-setting.
- Ensure that children indicate what they have learned at the end of each session.
- Develop the role of governors as 'critical friends'.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Nearly all children have had some pre-school experience and this enables them to settle quickly into classroom routines. They make good progress in Reception classes and join Year 1 with attainments that are above the national expectations. Good teaching enables most children to make good progress through Years 1 and 2. In teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, children reach results that are well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Results have been this high for five years.

Children's results in the 2006 national tests at the end of year 6 were well above average. An exceptionally high proportion of children achieved the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Most children made good progress. In 2005, tests results were lower than usual because that year group had an exceptionally high proportion of children with statements of additional need connected with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These children achieved well against their capabilities but the majority did not reach the average level [Level 4]. This resulted in a relative 'dip' in national test results.

Those children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in additional classes and in the main school make good progress. Those in the additional classes are very well taught. Those children in main school benefit from the good support of teaching assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school was over-modest when it judged this aspect to be good because the inspection found it to be outstanding. Parents write very positively about their child's enjoyment of school, for instance, 'she absolutely loves it' and, 'he is so happy'. Children echo this view and talk about having great friendships and going on really interesting visits, 'where you get dressed up!' one youngster enthused. Attendance is well above average because children enjoy school so much. They socialise well with each other and make new arrivals feel welcome very quickly. They reported that they feel very safe from bullying and know that adults would 'sort things out' if it becomes necessary. They try hard and are very keen to learn. The work children willingly do for their class, the school and the wider community is excellent. Whilst children's moral and social awareness are outstanding, there are relative weaknesses in their spiritual and cultural development. For example, children have a limited understanding of life in a

multi-cultural society. Children attending additional classes make great strides in their personal development. This is encapsulated by parents comments, 'the excellent support my child has received has led to her developing socially well beyond our hopes and expectations.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Very positive relationships between adults and children help create a calm atmosphere in which everyone can learn. Praise is used well by teachers to encourage everyone to 'have a go'. Teachers use questioning well to help children recall prior knowledge and to talk through how they arrived at an answer. Children are keen to share their knowledge and use a very wide vocabulary to express what they know. The rest of the class listen attentively and are ready to add their comments when asked. Teachers do not always share the intentions of lessons with the children and tasks are not always well matched to individual needs because teachers do not ask children to assess their own learning regularly. Children make very rapid progress in their reading skills because they are highly motivated and read every night. In the Foundation Stage, children learn through an exciting range of skilfully planned activities that make it look as though they are playing! Activities are very well linked to a central theme. For example, copying a Christmas tree onto a peg board involved children counting, sharing resources, developing hand-eye coordination and checking their answer and yet children thought they were making a tree! Teaching in the additional classes is very good. Staff speak clearly and accurately when explaining tasks. Children's views and ideas are valued, which raises their self-esteem.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the learning needs of children. Children and their parents like the recently begun lessons of European languages in Key Stage 2. The school uses links between subjects exceptionally well, for example, high quality displays of children's art also demonstrate that they know a great deal about historical topics and can write sensitive poetry. Children's understanding of staying healthy is very well promoted through the high quality personal, social and health programme, which includes memorable visits by characters like 'Colin the Carrot'. The school offers a good range of extra clubs and parents appreciate the facility of the after-school club. Teachers make good use of assessment information to identify children who need additional support. Extra provision for the most able children is not well planned because the school has yet to formally identify these children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are unanimous in their view that children are safe and well cared for. They recognise that staff treat all the children very sensitively. Procedures to keep children safe are in place. Newsletters and reports keep parents well informed about events in school and their child's progress, though a small minority of parents would like a mid-year meeting earlier than March. The school provides information on routines, homework and what the class will study so that parents can help their child at home. All children know how to improve their work because teachers' mark it very thoroughly. The parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are kept fully informed about the additional provision for their child. The inspection agrees with the parents of these children that the care and support that their children get is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Effective leadership by the acting headteacher and new senior management team ensures that equality of opportunity and inclusion are at the heart of this school's values. After a period of staff changes, the school's managers have done well to create a common sense of purpose amongst all staff. Governors are the first to congratulate children and staff on their many successes but do not yet follow through with their questioning of management. Management's systems to check the quality of the school's work are satisfactory, but the information gathered is not used to the full. For instance, children's progress through the school is checked, but the information gathered is not used consistently to inform the school's forward planning or to set the school challenging targets in the Year 6 national tests. Teachers' lessons and children's work are not checked regularly enough to identify the inconsistencies in teaching identified by the inspection. Management maintains a thorough overview of spending and has well developed plans to spend the accrued surplus of funds.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

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 disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

We really enjoyed our recent visit to your school. You were very welcoming towards us. We valued what you and your parents told us and used the information to inform our judgements. We think yours is a good school. It helps you make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Teaching is good. Teachers were good at asking questions and you showed us that you have an excellent ability to explain your answer. They also build your confidence, for instance by getting everyone to take turns to explain what their group has done. Teachers' marking is consistently good and helps you improve your work.

You played your part in this inspection to the full and did it outstandingly well! We found that you behaved exceptionally well. You were very keen to learn in all the lessons we saw, confidently answering teachers' questions and applying yourself to the tasks set. Your understanding of how to stay fit and healthy was outstanding. It was very good to hear you talk about the school council and how it was giving you an understanding of elections. You said that you felt safe in school because the staff are very caring and we agree.

We agree with the parents of children who attend the additional classes who told us that they were really good. Skilled teaching here helps these children make good progress. We thought it was really good that all children mix socially and for lessons.

Your school is doing well, but there are some areas where it can improve further. We have asked the acting headteacher and his staff to introduce systems which will encourage you to assess what you have learned in each lesson. Also we want the school's management to make better use of the information it has to plan ahead.

Thank you so much for helping us with our inspection. You all made an outstanding contribution. We hope that you are all proud of what you, the staff, governors and parents have achieved and we wish you and the school all the best for the future.