



Barons Court Infant School and Nursery

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114787
Local Authority SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number 290028
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Alison Pangbourne

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Avenue Road
School category	Community		Westcliff-on-sea
Age range of pupils	3–7		Essex SS0 7PJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702 331356
Number on roll (school)	146	Fax number	01702 391019
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Sheila Lesley OBE
		Headteacher	Mrs. Gyl Wood
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves an area of social and economic disadvantage. There are, however, some pockets of affluence. Movement in and out of school is significant. This is because some homeless families are re-housed out of the area. In addition, some families who are housed locally are immigrants, refugees, transient workers or asylum seekers. Pupils come from many cultures. One in five speaks English as an additional language and 20 different languages are spoken. The attainment of children starting in the Nursery is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion entitled to free school meals. The school is part of the Southend Excellence Cluster and has achieved a number of awards, including Investors in People, the Gold Artsmark and the National Association for Able Children (NACE) Challenge award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school's motto is, 'Caring, sharing and achieving' and this sums it up admirably. It is an outstanding school where every child really does matter. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and one very accurately described it as 'a very well led and managed school that strives for inclusivity and excellence'. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They learn the importance of good manners, offering a hand to shake, unprompted, when welcoming visitors. Their behaviour is excellent and they become confident and independent because they receive such outstanding care and support. Pupils say that they love coming to school because they have such exciting lessons and lots of clubs to join after school and at lunchtime. One said, 'You get a really nice welcome when you come here!' All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, those who are especially able and those who speak English as an additional language are challenged effectively and make outstanding progress. Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and Reception classes so that most of them reach the expected standard by the beginning of Year 1, despite their poorly developed skills on entry. Standards have risen every year for the last three years and are now above average by the end of Year 2. This has not happened by accident! Teaching and learning are outstandingly successful, because activities are very closely matched to the needs of each pupil and their progress is very closely monitored. If a pupil appears to be lagging behind or doing exceptionally well then programmes are put into place to enable them to do as well as possible. Furthermore, many pupils arrive in school at short notice and the school quickly assesses newcomers to ensure that their needs are met. The outstanding curriculum, based on pupils' interests, results in pupils showing an excitement and interest in learning that is unusual for such young children. The vibrancy of the curriculum is evident in the work on display. There is excellent provision for pupils with learning disabilities, those with specific talents and those who speak English as an additional language. This also has a significant effect on the progress these pupils make. At the forefront is the headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, leading the enthusiastic staff towards yet another exciting development. She provides excellent leadership and has been very effective in building a strong, stable team, who together contribute strongly to the raising of standards. School leaders have an accurate view of the school and are continually looking for ways to further improve. The many national awards that the school has received have given very good opportunities for staff to develop new skills. The headteacher is strongly committed to involving parents in their child's learning. This is not easy, as families frequently move in and out of the area. In this respect, the excellent Community Library and Information Centre (CLIC) provides courses for parents and opportunities for them to work with their children. It is extremely popular because it is helping them understand of how best to help their children learn. However, the school does not currently tell parents precisely the level their children have reached in their learning. The school has recently employed a home/school worker and this is already having a positive effect on attendance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Involve parents even more in their children's learning by helping them to understand the stage their children have reached so they can help them to make even further progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children make good progress through Nursery and Reception because they are taught well and given interesting things to do. By the end of the Reception year most have reached the goals expected for their age. Pupils' achievement is excellent through Years 1 and 2 and this is reflected in Year 2 assessments in 2006, where standards were above the national figure in reading, writing, mathematics and science. High standards of work are also being achieved in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely well behaved and thoroughly enjoy school. They particularly like keeping healthy through physical education lessons and breakfast club activities, such as 'Magic Movers' for pupils who need extra help. They make an excellent contribution to their community through their 'Eco' project, picking up litter and recycling paper. They readily accept responsibility and have, for example, monitored the use of paper towels on their own initiative. They develop an excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through the caring ethos and the diversity of backgrounds represented in school. Their good basic skills and excellent personal skills equip them very well for their future lives. Attendance is improving, because the school takes strong measures to help parents to understand its importance. However, it remains below average because a few parents continue to keep their children at home unnecessarily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

There is a tangible team spirit amongst teachers and support staff. Each has very high expectations and sets very challenging tasks for pupils. They use questions extremely effectively to include pupils and to develop their understanding. They also encourage pupils to work together in pairs or small groups to develop their confidence. At this early stage in the term, teachers already know their pupils very well and make learning fun. Exciting methods, such as whispering to a puppet, captivate the pupils and keep their attention. Not a moment is wasted! There are plenty of adults in each class so pupils are rarely 'stuck' for long. Very thorough assessment means that staff quickly

identify pupils needing extra help. Each pupil's progress is very closely tracked and targets are set to help them succeed. This contributes very strongly to the rising standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum offers a much wider range of opportunities than usual for infants. Their own interests are used as a starting point and topics are planned around them to cover all the necessary elements across many subjects. French is taught to all pupils and the attractive outdoor environment is used very effectively to help pupils learn. Artists regularly share their skills with them. The school is working towards the International Dimension award, which celebrates cultural diversity and provides lots of opportunities to link with children across the world. A large number of visits, visitors and out of school activities make learning interesting and encourage skills such as gardening. The well-stocked plots, brimming with vegetables, show that the curriculum makes an excellent contribution to healthy eating!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's caring ethos means that pupils and their parents feel valued. Outstanding support is given to parents, particularly through the CLIC project, enabling them to work with the school to help their children to do well. Currently, the school does not tell parents precisely where their children have reached in their learning and this would further improve the information they receive. Pupils know what they need to do to improve because teachers talk through their work and tell them the next steps. They particularly like saying whether or not they have understood their work because they know they will get extra help if they need it. The school takes excellent care of its pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and effective. Very good induction procedures mean that the youngest children and other newcomers settle very quickly, get to know their teachers and soon become confident to explore new activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The excellent leadership by the headteacher is fundamental to the school's success. Everything she does is for the benefit of the pupils and this continually drives the school forward. She uses her skills to secure any available funding that will help raise standards. Staff development is enhanced by the wide range of awards and projects with which the school has become involved. Staff speak highly of the skills they have developed which contribute to the very high quality of teaching. The headteacher knows that parents are able to help to up standards and she offers them much high quality support. For example, as part of induction arrangements, she demonstrates to parents how to read a story with their child. The governors are strong supporters of the school and question new initiatives to ensure they provide value for money. Because

of the excellent commitment and teamwork shown by all at the school, it is in an extremely strong position to continue improving

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

15 September 2006 Dear children Barons Court Infant School and Nursery, Avenue Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, SS0 7PJ Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I liked best. You told me that your school is friendly and welcoming and I agree with you. I was impressed by your good manners and the way that you greeted me. I thought that your behaviour was excellent and that you played very nicely with your friends. You have lots of interesting things to do in lessons and before and after school as well. You have all worked very hard to grow such a lot of vegetables! All the grown-ups look after you extremely well and help you to learn. If you find learning hard or you are just learning to speak English you get lots of help. All the teachers make sure that your school is a lovely place to be. Your families know that you attend a wonderful school. There are lots of opportunities for your families to come in to school to find out how you learn so that they can help you at home. Some of you come with your families. Your school gives lots of information about how you are getting on to your families but I have asked them to tell your families the stages that you have reached in your work so they can help you even more. You can also help by continuing to try as hard as you can to do your best. I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Barons Court School and do well in your next school. Best wishes Alison Pangbourne Lead inspector