



Bowlsh Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123672
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292741
Inspection date 28 February 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Burghart

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Bowlsh
School category	Community		Shepton Mallet
Age range of pupils	4-7		BA4 5JQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01749 342514
Number on roll (school)	82	Fax number	01749 344424
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Vacant Position
		Headteacher	D Levien
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small infant school on the outskirts of a market town. Nearly all pupils are of White British origin and all speak English as their first language. Their attainment when they first join the school varies widely but overall is about what is normally expected. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is average.

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. Pupils achieve well and consistently reach above-average standards. Standards are particularly high in reading and mathematics, but not as strong in writing, which is a relative weakness. Although pupils do not do as well as they do in other subjects, writing is still above average. Good provision in Reception results in children reaching virtually all the goals expected by the time they join Year 1. This good start is successfully built upon to ensure that pupils' development is good in personal as well as academic terms. Pupils respond very well and behaviour is excellent. Pupils enjoy school and, because they are given good opportunities, learn how to stay safe and keep healthy. They are well prepared for the next phase of education. Moral and social development is outstanding and spiritual development is good. Cultural development is satisfactory overall, but pupils' multicultural awareness is less well developed.

The curriculum is well planned, broad and balanced. Teaching is good throughout the school and, as a result, pupils achieve well. In a big improvement since the last inspection, assessment is used successfully to identify targets and modify future planning. Provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities is good and helps such pupils to make good progress. Links with parents and outside agencies such as the education welfare officer are good. Parents are rightfully very confident in the school because it takes good care of their children.

The school is well run. Leadership and management are good and have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. There is a strong sense of teamwork amongst staff and governors and a clear understanding of strengths and relative weaknesses. In discussion, it is clear that all concerned really believe Bowlish is a good school. However, documentation shows that senior managers have been too modest and overcautious in judging a variety of features as satisfactory. The school's track record in making improvements, such as in very effectively developing provision for physical education and health education, is good. There is a good capacity for, and a strong commitment to, further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils always do as well in writing, as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of living in our country as a multicultural society.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils consistently achieve well and reach standards which are above average. In 2006 the school's national assessment results were well above average in reading and mathematics. Writing standards, although above average, have been a relative weakness

over the last three years. This has been most obvious in a lower proportion of more-able pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3), but also reflects that pupils generally achieved less well than in reading and mathematics. Writing has rightly been identified by the school as an area for development and, as a result, standards have been improved during this school year. A recent focus on spelling is proving successful and leading to further improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress and frequently reach near-average levels.

The school is on course to meet its own challenging targets for the pupils now in Year 2 with standards currently being above average. This represents continued good progress from average starting points when children join Reception. It shows that the school makes the most of the good start in the Foundation Stage, where Reception children make good progress and standards are good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their moral and social development is excellent. Pupils are considerate, willing to listen to each other, and prepared to work and play together. Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school. Very good habits established in Reception in learning to share and to take turns pay dividends in Years 1 and 2. Pupils clearly know right from wrong and show a strong sense of responsibility. Good spiritual development is evident not only in the way pupils respond in assemblies, but in how they appreciate colour, music and the natural world. Year 2 art lessons developing marbling techniques and Year 1 sketching furry mammals are obvious treats! Cultural development is judged satisfactory overall rather than good because there are too few opportunities for pupils to gain an awareness of Britain as a multicultural society.

Pupils enjoy school. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils know how to stay safe, keep fit and eat healthily. They like playing their part in the school as a community. They willingly join in activities and share in decisions to set rules for the classroom and playground. The lack of a school council is a missed opportunity to take this further and formally consider pupils' views. However, close relationships mean that pupils know who they can turn to and that they will be listened to.

Good basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) prepare pupils well for the junior school and for life in general.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching gives rise to good learning throughout the school. Teachers and their assistants are a very good team. They make work interesting and ensure that pupils of all abilities are well supported and appropriately challenged. Skilled questioning

encourages pupils to think before answering and very good relationships mean there is an atmosphere of trust in each class. Marking, which was a weakness identified in the last report, is now good and shows pupils how they can learn from their mistakes and make improvements.

That the school has judged teaching as satisfactory rather than good is a compliment to the staff's commitment to do even better and an acknowledgement that they do not wish to appear in any way complacent. The inspection's good judgement for teaching is securely based on the standards pupils achieve and their good personal development.

Ways in which teaching could still be improved include ensuring that activities do not go on too long, and making even more use of what the new interactive whiteboards can do.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum on offer is good. It gives pupils of all abilities a broad, balanced and relevant range of opportunities. There are good links between subjects, for example, ICT used as a tool to complement numeracy skills and role play to bring history to life. The curriculum is designed to capture pupils' interest, and comments like 'It's fun here!' and 'I really like maths' show that this is successful.

A good range of visits and extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal and health education. There are good links with other local schools which enhance the curriculum, for example, joint staff training in literacy and the use of assessment. A point for development lies in further improving opportunities for pupils to use and develop their writing skills in other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes very good physical and pastoral care of pupils. There are robust systems in place to confirm all adults working in school are properly checked and are appropriately qualified. Procedures to ensure the health and safety of all those on site are good. It is not surprising that pupils feel safe and that parents have confidence in the school.

Academic guidance is good and much improved. Assessment data is used effectively to measure and track progress and make sure pupils are challenged. Teachers' good marking helps pupils to see how they can improve their work. Setting targets for individuals in addition to those already in place for overall improvement is the next step towards raising standards further. Satisfactory plans for this are in hand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well run. Leadership and management are good. This is a better judgement than the school's own view as recorded in its self-evaluation form. The inspection's more positive assessment takes into account the very positive outcomes of the management of the headteacher, staff and governors in terms of pupils' learning, personal development and the standards achieved. Examples of the strength of management include not only the influence of the headteacher but the successful teamwork of subject coordinators and their contribution to school development. Support for those with learning difficulties or disabilities and provision for Reception are well managed.

Comments from parents such as 'this is an excellent school, giving children a really good start' and 'we are very happy with Bowlish school and have every confidence in the teachers' are commonplace. These reinforce the views that staff and governors express orally. There is no doubt that the school has made good progress since the last inspection and has reliable procedures in place to ensure value for money. It is well placed to continue to make improvements.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

What a treat for me to visit your school! You were so welcoming, polite and well behaved that I wished I could have stayed longer. I could see from the way you work and play together and how enthusiastically you sing in assembly that you really enjoy coming to school.

Bowlsh Infants is a good school and can be proud of the standards that you reach, especially in reading and maths, as well as the way you are growing up as sensible people.

Here are some of the school's highlights.

- It is a friendly, happy place.
- The teachers do a good job. They make work interesting and help you to do your best by showing you how you can make even better progress.
- Staff take very good care of you.
- The school is well run.

To be even more successful, this is what the school should do.

- Keep working at making your writing as good as it could be.
- Give you more chances to find out about the different ways people live in our country.

I wish you all well for the future.