

Bromham CofE VC Lower School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109611
Local Authority	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310038
Inspection dates	8–9 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John White
Headteacher	Mrs Virginia Gilks
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Grange Lane Bromham Bedford MK43 8NR
Telephone number	01234822784
Fax number	01234826395

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized lower school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need are both similar to the picture nationally. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, none are at an early stage of acquiring English. The school achieved Healthy School Status in 2006, Investors in People in 2005, Gold Sports Mark and ECO School Silver Award in 2006. The headteacher took up post in January 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bromham is a good school with some outstanding features and deserves the reputation it holds locally. Many parents speak highly of the school and a comment made by one and echoed by others sums up parental feelings, 'A very happy and caring school where children thrive and make good progress.' Inspection findings generally support the school's view of its own effectiveness, although at times its judgements are a little generous. However, there is no sense of complacency, instead a desire to make the school even better. This tangible goal and vision aligned with the school's good track record of development indicates the school is well placed for continued improvement.

Attainment when pupils start school is a little above national expectations. By the time that pupils leave the school standards are high across the board. This represents good progress for all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The reasons for this are clear. Much of the teaching and learning is good, and at times, outstanding. Lessons are often fun but demanding and pupils are challenged and kept on their toes throughout. When teaching reaches a higher level it is because teachers set tasks that encourage pupils to be investigative, inquisitive learners in lessons that are packed full of pace, interest and enjoyment. There are occasions however when tasks that are set are too easy and do not meet the academic needs of some pupils. Assessment is another strength that impacts significantly on how well pupils achieve. The robust and rigorous procedures mean that teachers have an accurate grasp of exactly what pupils can and cannot do. The information is then used well to inform teaching and to set targets that help pupils to improve.

Pupils' personal development is good with some outstanding aspects. Pupils are well-behaved and very enthusiastic learners who love coming to school, which is reflected in the excellent attendance rates. Pupils' knowledge of what is needed to follow healthy lifestyles and keep safe is outstanding. They make an important contribution to decision making, to creating a sense of community spirit within the school and developing key skills that equip them well for their future. The curriculum is good because it helps pupils to enjoy learning and to achieve well. It provides a wide array of popular enrichment activities. There is little doubt that the emphasis that the school places on developing pupils' basic skills is a key factor in the high standards that pupils reach. However, less emphasis is placed on how these and other skills can be enhanced through use across all subjects, in the exciting and innovative curriculum and enterprise initiatives. Care and guidance are good. Pupils' pastoral care is very good, equality of opportunity is actively promoted and pupils are generally well informed about their progress.

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. Leadership at all levels is focused on providing the best for pupils and making Bromham the place to be. There is a very strong sense of collaboration and reflection where continuous improvement is the goal and the setting of challenging targets is the norm in the school's quest for excellence.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provision is good with aspects that are outstanding. The curriculum is vibrant and fun and, from an early age, pupils are encouraged to be independent and inquisitive learners. The good, and at times outstanding, teaching provides a very good balance between practical learning experiences and the direct teaching of key skills. The very well planned array

of exciting learning activities motivates and engages the pupils in equal measure. Good use is made of the spacious and attractive outside play area but a lack of cover prevents its constant use. Staff work together very well and the continuous ongoing assessment provides them with a very good picture of how each pupil is progressing. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the seeds for independent and motivated learning are certainly planted here. The very good leadership of the Foundation Stage ensure that partnerships with parents are strong, that induction procedures enable pupils to quickly settle into daily routines and importantly enable them to make a very successful start on their educational journey.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the level of challenge on offer for all pupils and particularly the most able, is consistently high.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing, problem solving, computer and thinking skills.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Across the school, pupils achieve well and by the time they leave standards are high. This owes much to the good quality of teaching and the pupils' enthusiasm for learning. When pupils start school attainment is a little above national expectations. The flying start that pupils get in the Foundation Stage is reflected in the fact that by the end of the Reception year standards are securely above national expectations in all areas of learning. The school's very good quality assessment and tracking procedures alongside national test data provide compelling evidence of the good progress that all pupils make. By the end of Year 2, data shows that standards in all subjects are never less than significantly above the national average and at times are exceptionally high. This pattern continues in Years 3 and 4 ensuring that pupils are academically well prepared for the next stage of their education. There are however occasions when the challenge on offer, particularly, but not exclusively, for the most able pupils is not quite high enough and this stops progress from being even better.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with some outstanding aspects. Pupils behave well and add much to the high quality of relationships that wrap around the school. Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners who enjoy coming to school; a fact that is reflected in the outstanding attendance rates. Pupils are thoughtful, reflective individuals who show a genuine concern for the well-being of others and understand well how their actions can affect others. Pupils' knowledge of Britain as a culturally diverse society is a little patchy. They demonstrate an excellent awareness of what is needed to follow healthy lifestyles and to keep safe, helped in no small measure by initiatives such as fruit snacks, balanced meals, 'buddy' system, lunchtime counsellors and the 'concern box.' Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community but a lack of opportunities to test out their thinking and problem solving skills in exciting curriculum initiatives prevents them developing as accomplished independent learners. There is little doubt however that pupils leave with skills that will contribute well to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and at times outstanding, which contributes significantly to pupils' good achievement. Across the school relationships within lessons, teachers' good management skills and pupils' desire to do well are a winning combination in creating an effective learning environment. Teaching assistants play an influential role in supporting and enhancing pupil progress. Many lessons move along at a good pace. They first capture and then maintain the interest of pupils because the lesson content is presented in a lively and engaging manner and is well matched to the differing needs of pupils. When teaching is outstanding, pupils are encouraged to be investigative learners, to solve challenging problems and to work at a cracking pace; all in a fun and exciting manner. There are times, however, when the work set is not matched closely enough to the abilities of some pupils. Assessment is very good because it is regular and rigorous and information is used well to carefully track pupils' progress and to set challenging targets. The very good marking of pupils' work in a number of classes is characterised by clear pointers for improvement or explanations showing why a piece of work is good. However, this good practice is not embedded in all classes.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and adds much to pupils' enjoyment of school. Very good provision is made for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and computer skills continue to improve. The school has rightly identified the need for pupils' writing, computer, problem solving, thinking and creative skills to be further developed across different subjects and through other more innovative and exciting curriculum initiatives. The school provides pupils with the opportunity to learn a foreign language and for all pupils in Years 3 and 4 to play a musical instrument. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties. The enrichment opportunities on offer are good and include a wide array of visits and visitors, a residential trip and a good range of popular after school clubs including sporting activities, mathematics, dance and construction. The curriculum is very effective in how it promotes pupils' capacity to stay healthy and safe and to value the local community as an important learning resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Pastoral care is a particular strength. Staff know and respond to pupils' needs in a sensitive and caring manner. The individuality of pupils is recognised and celebrated. Good systems are in place for safeguarding pupils that help them to know that they are safe in school. Pupils feel valued and have a genuine voice through the school council, which has helped to bring about improvements in facilities. In this caring and nurturing environment, pupils are helped to reach the challenging targets set for them. The good links with outside support agencies, supplemented well by the school's own systems, means that help is swiftly on hand for any pupils experiencing difficulties. Academic guidance is a strong feature of the school's work and makes a significant contribution to how well pupils achieve. Pupils have a good awareness of the levels they are working at and towards although there are times when the targets that are set are not personalised enough to help accelerate their progress at an even faster rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. Although the headteacher has only been in post a very short time, the agenda for improvement drawn up, very closely and astutely match inspection findings. There is a very strong sense of team spirit and a shared determination and vision to take the school onto the next level. The senior management team and key subject leaders provide very good support to the headteacher and have played an influential role in maintaining high standards and a good quality of education during staffing changes. Good procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning through regular lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and review of teachers' planning. Equally good are the procedures for analysing test data, identifying areas for improvement and then robustly tackling them. At present however, some subject leaders do not play an active enough role in analysing standards attained by pupils in subjects they are responsible for. Governance is good because governors strike an effective balance between supporting the school but always being ready to ask searching, challenging but constructive questions.

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Annex A

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

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

10 January 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Bromham Lower School, Bromham, Bedford, MK43 8NR

You will probably remember that we visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what we found out. Before I do, I would first like to say a big thank you for making us feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how you were all so polite and helpful and that you said many positive things about your school. We managed to talk to lots of you, it was good to hear how much you love school, and that bullying is not an issue.

Many of you said that Bromham is a good school and we agree; it is. There are some things that are outstanding. Teaching is good and at times outstanding. Teachers certainly keep you on your toes! All staff care for you very well and make learning fun and enjoyable through the different activities that are on offer. The school is excellent in helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. All the staff work together very well to help provide a good quality of education for all pupils at the school. There is another strength of the school that I have not talked about yet..... and that is you! We were impressed with your behaviour, your enthusiasm and excellent attendance rates. We found that the way you add to the sense of community in the school and help to make decisions, through for example, the school council, is good. Well done!

Even good schools can improve and we have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school even better. They are going to make sure that work is always challenging, not too hard but not too easy. They are going to make learning even better by looking at ways in which your writing, mathematics, computer and other skills can be practised in different subjects and in other exciting learning activities.

Your headteacher and all the staff and governors want the school to be one of the best. I know you will want to play your part by continuing to work hard and behave well. We wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead inspector