

Bowmansgreen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117187
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326546
Inspection dates	8–9 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	365
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Morriss
Headteacher	Mrs Moira White
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Telford Road London Colney St. Albans Hertfordshire AL2 1PH
Telephone number	01727 767772
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Bowmansgreen Primary School is a larger-than-average school serving the urban village of London Colney, near St Albans. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage at Reception with below average attainment. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is smaller than average. The school has Healthy Schools Accreditation, and the Sports Activemark Award.

There are independent childcare services, "Golden Opportunities Childcare Services" on the school site. These services were the subject of a separate inspection.

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 in which pupils make good progress. Those children who join the Reception Year get off to a good start. Their skills and knowledge when they arrive are below average, but staff are very quickly aware of their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, by the end of the Reception Year children have caught up and are at the levels expected of their age group. At the end of each key stage, standards remain in line with national figures. The teachers ensure that standards do not slip, in spite of the fact that many pupils join the school from elsewhere at different points in the school year.

Pupils make good progress because of the excellent care which pupils receive and the very positive climate fostered in the school lead to good personal development and well-being. Pupils feel safe and secure in an atmosphere which motivates them to learn. They enjoy their learning, and have good attitudes towards it. This is reflected in their improving attendance and good behaviour. Good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan and organise lessons well, give good attention to pupils' differing learning needs and are well supported by classroom assistants. Some lessons are outstanding, and many are good, encouraging pupils to think and learn for themselves. In a small number of lessons, however, teachers do not sufficiently encourage pupils to be independent. In these lessons teachers talk too much and the pupils get restless. The school is aware that because of this standards are not always as high as they could be.

The interesting curriculum encourages skills to be transferred across subjects. Pupils are excited by applying their learning across a range of activities from French and music to after-school clubs, such as Cheerleaders Club. Pupils make full use of school activities, such as membership of the school council to put into practice what they have learnt about their rights and responsibilities. The school promotes community cohesion well within the school and at a local level, but has not yet sufficiently developed pupils' understanding of what it means to be a citizen of the United Kingdom and of the world.

The majority of parents hold very positive views about the school. Typical comments from the parents' questionnaires included: 'Our daughter thoroughly enjoys school and the progress she has made has been a direct result of the challenging and enjoyable learning opportunities in and out of the classroom.'

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has shown a striking vision in her leadership and considerable determination in taking decisive and successful action to improve provision within the school. She has communicated her vision very strongly to the whole-school community. Governance is good. Governors ask the right questions to ensure continued progress. The school gives good value for money and demonstrates a strong capacity to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the Reception Year with knowledge and skills that are below average. By the time they enter Key Stage 1, their skills are those expected at their age. In the Reception classes, generally good teaching, detailed planning and clear expectations support learning and development well and promote good progress. Children's welfare is promoted extremely well due to highly committed staff. Personal development is good and is enhanced by a good balance

of those activities directed by adults and those chosen by the children. The outdoor area provides many exciting activities that support learning effectively although currently access is restricted. Staff have high expectations of children's ability to work independently and the children confidently access equipment which they use appropriately in cooperation with their peers. All staff use good questioning strategies to encourage children to think hard about their learning. Every opportunity is taken to use the children's first hand experiences to provide interesting conversations and real reasons for writing; for example, the follow up work of the recent visit to a centre, especially the 'Ticket Office' in the outside playhouse. Consequently, children speak confidently and are developing a wide vocabulary. Leadership and management are good and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff record children's progress carefully and use assessments well to plan the next steps in their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly by ensuring the consistency of good or better teaching.
- Ensure that pupils are more understanding of the diversity of United Kingdom and world communities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards at the end of both key stages in the last three years were adversely affected by the high mobility of pupils, and in 2008 were slightly below average. The school's comparative data for these pupils show that when the starting points of the new arrivals are taken into account, even the 2008 figures represent good progress overall for them. However, the school has acknowledged that standards overall were not high enough, and has taken strong action to improve them. The current picture, as shown by the school, shows standards broadly in line with national figures at the end of each Key Stage. The current cohorts in Years 2 and 6 are in line to meet their challenging targets, as indicated by their classwork. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with their classmates because of the good support that they receive both inside and outside of class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have good relationships with adults and with each other, and behave well. The pupils report that 'the school is as safe as houses' and any bullying is swiftly and firmly dealt with. The school has been successful in reducing the number of poor or non-attenders. As a result, attendance is broadly average and improving. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They work well together and are keen to take part in the range of school activities offered. They have a good understanding of safe practices, as demonstrated by their behaviour around the school. Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities to exercise responsibility in the classroom, around the school and in the wider community. The house captains and school council all take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils' preparation for their future studies is satisfactory in terms of their literacy and numeracy, but their collaborative skills and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall, but lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. The large majority were good. All teachers successfully create a positive classroom atmosphere and this gives rise to strong relationships. Teaching assistants are effectively deployed and make a valuable contribution to learning, particularly for those who need additional help with literacy and numeracy.

In the best lessons, activities are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs. Pupils know what they are expected to learn because teachers share the purpose of the lesson with the class at the start, and check that pupils are clear about their tasks before embarking on them. As a result, pupils are suitably challenged and their interest is maintained, and they make good or, in some cases, outstanding gains in their learning. In the small number of less effective lessons, the teachers talk too much, pupils are not always clear what they have to do, their interest wanes and their progress slows. The marking of pupils' work is mostly constructive and helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is highly successful in promoting pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship needs. ICT is used successfully to raise the achievement of pupils and the school is exploring ways of ensuring that it is accessible to all lessons for every subject. The secondary school link with French, mentioned in the last report, continues to work well with more school staff taking over the teaching role. The enrichment programme supports the regular taught curriculum with a variety of events and visitors to the school.

Regular extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, support the promotion of healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is still under review and several new initiatives are still being embedded; for example the wider use of transferable skills. The effectiveness of this initiative is particularly seen in the emphasis of writing in a range of subject areas, particularly, but not exclusively, history.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils is good. The pastoral care of pupils is strong, and pupils appreciate the support that teachers give and the way they make learning interesting. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and any aspect identified as putting pupils in danger is remedied. All groups of children are well supported with good links to outside agencies. There are secure procedures for child protection and safeguarding pupils. Everyday care in the classroom is very good.

The support for vulnerable pupils is particularly good with the designated support base classroom ensuring that pupils with particular needs are kept in mainstream education and experience success. The academic guidance is good, though day-to-day marking is currently inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher sets the pace of change and staff follow her clear lead with enthusiasm. The restructuring of the senior leadership team at the beginning of the current academic year is resulting in robust systems for both strategic planning and checking the effectiveness of the school's work. Through them, the staff have raised the quality of teaching and learning, improved pupils' enjoyment through an exciting and engaging curriculum, and are tracking pupils' progress effectively against challenging targets. These initiatives are making a clear difference. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. The school is clear about, and has already identified its priorities to raise standards through consistently good or better teaching and to increase pupils' awareness of the national and global communities. Governors support the school well and play an active and key role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and holding it to account for its performance.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 June 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Bowmansgreen Primary School, London Colney, AL2 1PH

Thank you all for the lovely welcome you extended to us when we visited your school. We found you all to be very helpful and very friendly. We judge your school to be good, and some things are really great, for example the way you are looked after when you are in school. We enjoyed joining you during your lessons, reading your work and talking to you. We particularly enjoyed how you laughed at the way Mr. Wilding introduced the story of Jonah and the Whale in assembly, and how you joined in the pom-pom dancing in Cheerleaders' Club. We saw there some of the reasons why you like school so much.

We would like to compliment you on the way you look after your school and produce the very good displays we saw around the corridors and in the classrooms. We like the way you take responsibility, for example, in your contribution to the work of the school council and the way you help each other during playtimes and lunchtimes.

To make things even better, we have asked Mrs. White to help you get higher marks in all your subjects by making sure that all your lessons are as good as the very best ones, where you learn by doing things for yourselves. We have also asked the school to draw up a plan which will give you more opportunities to know and understand the world beyond school, especially about life in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

We believe that these will make the school even better than it is now. Of course, you can help by making sure you attend school every day and by doing your best in class.

I wish you all well in the future.

Ronald Cohen

Lead inspector