

Bulwell St Mary's Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122740
Local Authority	City of Nottingham
Inspection number	327788
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	309
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	Mrs Rachel Goodinson
Headteacher	Mr Philip Ball
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ragdale Road Bulwell Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG6 8GQ

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
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Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The percentage of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is twice the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. The school's provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises Nursery and Reception classes. A breakfast club operates on the school site, managed by the governors. The school has achieved Healthy School status and the Activemark for sport.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. The headteacher and staff are committed to providing a friendly and welcoming school where pupils respect each other. A very large majority of parents are happy with the school. They say, 'This is more than a school, it is a large family.' One parent, echoing the views of others, said: 'All the staff are approachable and fair. Any concerns are dealt with quickly and well.'

Pupils enter the school with below average standards. They make satisfactory progress, leaving in Year 6 with standards that remain below average. Achievement is therefore satisfactory overall. Attainment fluctuates mainly because of changing rates of progress from year to year and between subjects. In 2008, the rate of progress was good in writing, enabling pupils to attain higher standards than in 2007. However, attainment in mathematics in 2008 was much lower than the previous year. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed, although this information is not collated in such a way as to enable the school to measure how well it is doing or teachers to identify pupils' underachievement quickly enough to provide effective support.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The recent drive to support provision in writing is beginning to deliver much needed improvement, although the school recognises that there is further work to be done. Lessons sometimes lack challenge for pupils at different levels of ability. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are often good and pupils behave appropriately in lessons.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They make a strong contribution to the school community through the range of responsibilities on offer, and interact well with each other. Pupils are proud to be members of the active school council. Despite the school's considerable efforts to address attendance, rates remain a little below average. There is an appropriate focus on teaching pupils how to live healthily. The satisfactory curriculum provides pupils with sound skills for their future lives and has some good features, including popular additional activities and visits. Closer links across the curriculum are being planned to better promote links between subjects.

The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. There is good liaison with the church, and the vicar is a regular visitor. Some good links are forged with schools in Finland and The Netherlands that help pupils to recognise similarities and differences between cultures and to promote respect. Links with the local community are satisfactory, reflecting pupils' satisfactory knowledge of the differences between customs and religions of the United Kingdom. Although leadership and management are satisfactory overall, important systems to provide effective support are not well developed. The school identifies its priorities appropriately, but plans lack detail and do not link actions with measurable outcomes in pupils' attainment. Monitoring lacks rigour, and the school has been slow to challenge underachievement because teaching and learning are not analysed well. Senior staff are increasingly supported by governors, who are beginning to hold senior leaders to account for their work. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of education in the EYFS is satisfactory. Children like coming to school and parents are pleased with the welcome and support their families receive. Children enter the Nursery

with skills below those expected. In speaking, listening and calculation skills and in their personal, social and emotional development they are often well below national expectations. Initially, most are short of confidence and reliant on adults to tell them what to do. Many are very quiet and offer little in discussions. Learning and development are satisfactory, and adults watch over children's welfare suitably. However, while staff ask children questions, they do not provide enough opportunities for them to talk over their ideas with a partner. Thus, children often sit passively listening to others. The staff also miss opportunities to focus on key words and to encourage the children to use these in speaking or writing activities. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. The majority of children make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately by the time they leave the Reception Year. However, planning does not identify precisely what the children are to learn and does not help them to move learning forward quickly enough because some activities do not present a high level of challenge. Leadership and management of the EYFS are satisfactory but there is scope to extend the monitoring of planning, teaching and learning so that senior staff have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus school improvement planning more closely on measurable outcomes in pupils' attainment.
- Provide greater challenge for all pupils through better use of assessment information.
- Introduce a clear and accessible system to track pupils' progress and use the information to plan for improving the rate of progress made by pupils.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

From low starting points pupils make satisfactory progress overall, including those with speech, language and communication difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and behavioural, social and emotional concerns. However, standards remain below average at the end of both key stages. Progress is satisfactory by the time pupils leave in Year 6. There have been some fluctuations in the rates of progress made. For example, the rate of progress in writing, an area of recent school focus, increased significantly last year. In 2008, progress in mathematics slowed for some pupils, with smaller proportions attaining the expected levels than in 2007. Although progress is satisfactory overall, there is unevenness in the progress made in different subjects in some classes. At the time of the inspection, the rate of pupil progress varied. The school has had some success in implementing its plans to raise standards in writing and pupils are on target to achieve increasingly challenging writing targets by the end of Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Within this context, their social development is good. Pupils play well together and support each other at playtimes by acting as playground buddies. They live in a city of rich cultural diversity, but their knowledge of cultures other than their own is satisfactory. Whilst they recognise the different cultures, they are not as aware as they could be of the differences between them. Levels of attendance

are below the national average, but the school works hard to improve these and the frequent late arrival of a number of pupils. Pupils are aware of the need to live healthy lifestyles and involve themselves well in the sporting activities offered to them. Not all pupils, however, are committed to eating healthy food. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is often good around school. It is satisfactory overall because, in some lessons, pupils lose interest in the tasks set and need support to help them behave appropriately. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community. The school council plays a strong role in the everyday life of the school and has its own budget to spend on improvements. A number of school councillors represent the school on the local area council. The satisfactory progress made in their learning helps pupils develop soundly in preparation for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers promote positive relationships and appropriate behaviour in classrooms. Most pupils enjoy learning and generally work hard. In some lessons, practical activities engage pupils and encourage them to develop problem-solving skills and learn for themselves. In these lessons, learning proceeds at a good pace and when this happens, learning is focused and pupils make good progress. However, planning does not always result in activities matched to the pupils' differing abilities, and learning is restricted when work is either not hard enough or too challenging. Questioning is directed to move pupils on, but some questioning is not open-ended enough to encourage learners to think for themselves. Opportunities to promote independent learning and for pupils to practise what they have learned are not always taken. The quality of marking is satisfactory and, in some cases it provides some useful guidance on the next steps pupils should take in their learning, notably in writing. It is less well developed in other subjects, such as in mathematics, where advice often focuses on presentation alone, rather than giving pointers as to how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy the broad range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including the breakfast club, and the take-up of after-school clubs is high. There is satisfactory support for pupils' understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. A range of visitors helps to enhance provision, as does the regular residential visits to places such as North Wales and Sheringham. Themed focus events such as the 'Making It' week help to make learning more meaningful. Pupils learn Spanish from the EYFS upwards. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used appropriately across the curriculum. Interactive whiteboards are used suitably to support teaching and learning, with teachers showing an improving level of competence in the use of this technology. The school is currently renewing its ICT equipment and plans to develop pupils' skills in this area, which are currently satisfactory. Planning occasionally lacks detail of how the work will challenge pupils of all abilities. The curriculum is not thoroughly and effectively monitored across the school and so rates of progress fluctuate across subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory levels of care and support for its pupils. Statutory requirements are in place so that procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' safety are met. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow should they have concerns over an individual child. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they have an adult to whom they can talk if they have a problem. The arrangements for supporting pupils who find learning hard are sound. The school identifies possible learning difficulties appropriately and provides sound support for the pupils identified so that they make similar satisfactory progress to their peers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and staff have concentrated on making this school a happy one and on providing pupils with a positive learning experience. The school's strategy for promoting community cohesion is satisfactory. The school improvement plan identifies a vision of what needs to be achieved to move the school forward, but it is not sufficiently linked to bringing about improvements in pupils' attainment. Tracking procedures are not suitably developed and do not give a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject leaders are committed to moving their subjects forward, although, presently, there is not enough consistency and focus in their practice to enable pupils to make consistently good progress. For example, monitoring by subject leaders does not provide a sharp enough view of relative strengths and weaknesses. Governors are developing their strategic role and provide satisfactory support.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

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

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bulwell St Mary Primary School, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8GQ

Thank you for making Mrs Hall, Mr Foster and myself so very welcome when we visited your school recently. We certainly enjoyed talking with you. We think yours is a satisfactory school and we know that you and many of your parents and carers think so too. We were impressed by your politeness and the way you get on with your teachers and each other.

Mr Ball and the staff make sure that you get on with each other around school and you make satisfactory progress. They are ensuring that those of you who sometimes find learning difficult receive the help you need. We were pleased to see how well you take pride in your school and look after it. We were also pleased to see how you take responsibility and are willing to do jobs and help around the school.

We have asked Mr Ball, the staff and governors to try to make your school even better by doing the following things.

- Make sure that plans to improve the school have enough information so that they can see how successful they have been.
- Carefully use information about your progress to make sure that you are given enough work that is challenging.
- Introduce a clear way of managing information about how well you are doing and use that information well.

You can help by working hard, getting to school on time and doing your very best and enjoying your time at school.

Yours sincerely

Ian Jones

Lead inspector