

The Bellbird Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135132
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	329033
Inspection date	30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	250
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	14
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Catherine Cleary
Headteacher	Mrs Linda Corral
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Link Road Sawston Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB22 3GB
Telephone number	01223 833216
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: current achievement in the school, the effectiveness of the new leadership team, the quality of teaching and learning, the use of assessment and tracking procedures and the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with pupils, the staff, and some governors, and an analysis of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

The Bellbird Primary School opened in September 2007 following the amalgamation of two local schools. It is located on two separate sites and demolition and building works are currently underway to establish new premises. There has been a high level of staff change. Children come from the local village and from a broad range of social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and four per cent speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who find learning more difficult is broadly average for a school of this size. The attainment of children who start in the Early Years Foundation Stage is below national expectations for their age. A playgroup on the lower school site and an after school club on the upper school site are run by management committees appointed by the governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Bellbird Primary has made an encouraging start, given the building difficulties and many staff changes. This is valued highly by pupils and their parents and is reflected in the many positive comments, such as 'coped well with the very considerable challenges' and 'a good family-feel despite the split site difficulties'. It provides a satisfactory education for its pupils and rightly sees itself as an improving school. The purposeful headteacher provides a clear direction and has been particularly effective, in such a short time, in establishing a team ethos and a strong sense of community. The school knows that, when it opened, the older pupils were not making enough progress. The leadership and management are developing effective procedures that are beginning to improve achievement and raise standards, although these are not yet consistently established in every class.

Pupils' personal development is good. They talk excitedly about their school and particularly the opportunities to contribute to its development; for example, school councillors explained how pupils helped decide its name. They behave excellently and show respect and tolerance in their relationships with others. They understand how to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles, showing a good awareness of traffic and building dangers when walking between the two sites. Pupils are attentive in lessons and are keen to succeed. They develop their key basic skills satisfactorily, although opportunities for them to gain a better understanding of the world of work are limited.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 1 and 2 because of good teaching and pupils' enthusiasm to learn. This builds successfully on the good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall as teaching is not always consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils achieve well, particularly those with previously high attainment. Pupils who find learning difficult receive effective individual support and guidance and achieve well. The school helps those from minority ethnic backgrounds to settle well, for example, by 'buddying up' with another pupil and providing extra support and guidance. They make satisfactory progress overall in their learning. Year 2 pupils attain standards that are above average. They are broadly average by the end of Year 6. The headteacher, with the help of her deputy and other key staff, is developing procedures to track each pupil's progress carefully and build up detailed assessment information. They are using it with increasing success to identify pupils who are not progressing as well as expected. Extra support is given by effective teaching assistants. Some pupils are offered 'drop in' sessions before school, booster classes and individual tuition sessions. This is improving standards. The school is on track to achieve challenging above average end-of-year targets for the current Year 2, although not for Year 6. Assessment and tracking processes are being used increasingly to set challenging achievement targets for each pupil. Procedures to evaluate rigorously their progress towards them are being established, although not fully in place.

Teachers manage their classes effectively and ensure that pupils stay focused on their work. They plan lessons in detail, although their expectations of what pupils achieve in lessons are not consistently high enough. Teaching does not always ensure the use of more challenging questions that require higher attaining pupils to apply their skills and knowledge and attain higher standards. The headteacher, with the support of external consultants, monitors teaching and learning each term. They provide training on areas for development and as a result there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Good practice is highlighted and shared although opportunities

for key staff to evaluate its impact on pupils' achievement and target improvement are not developed enough.

The supportive, caring ethos that the headteacher and her staff have quickly established is underpinning much of what is successful in the school. Pupils feel valued and eagerly contribute to improving the school, for example, their ideas to extend the range of extra-curricular clubs have resulted in a satisfactory curriculum and range of additional activities. Staff provide good personal care and support to their pupils. The guidance to help them to improve their work is less effective. Some teachers make good use of group targets and help pupils to assess how well they are doing. They encourage pupils to share ideas and help each other to improve their work. However, this good practice is not consistently evident across the school. Older pupils are not sufficiently confident in knowing what they have to do next to make their work better.

The determination and focus of the headteacher have encouraged a good sense of community cohesion. Strong links with other local schools and community organisations contribute well to pupils' learning. She has established an effective leadership team and increased the opportunities for other key staff to focus on what needs improving in their areas of responsibility. However, because of staffing changes, this is still in the early stages of development. Governors have been particularly supportive and active during the amalgamation. For example, they worked with the headteacher to gain additional funding to ensure that the pupils currently in the school are well provided for. Governors are increasingly involved in checking how well the school is doing, although this is not developed fully. The school is improving as a result of the headteacher and her increasingly effective staff team. It has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. From a below expected level when they start the Reception year, most children have 'caught up' by the time they move into Year 1. This is because the teaching by all adults is good and activities are well planned and interesting. Assessment of the children is thorough and ongoing. This means that the interesting and wide ranging activities are well matched to the children's abilities. No time is wasted and there is a good balance between activities which are led by adults and those that the children choose to do themselves. All adults have high expectations about what the children can achieve and this is shown in the rapid development of their excellent personal and social skills. Adults quite rightly place a high emphasis on good listening and speaking skills. As a result children can concentrate for longer periods of time and have more meaningful conversations, something many can't do when they first join the school.

Children also do well because of the good relationships which exist between them and the adults who teach them. They are encouraged to be independent and are taught the skills to be able to achieve this. Children are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The leader has a very good understanding of what children of this age should be learning and has created an environment in which it can happen. Although there is limited access to the outdoor area for the children to play and practise their skills, adults have tried to overcome this by having regular timetabled time for the whole class to be outside.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' standards by raising teachers' expectations, particularly of more able pupils, to a consistently high level in each class.

- Ensure all pupils know how well they are achieving and what they need to do next to raise the standard of their work.
- Increase the involvement of other key staff and governors in checking how well pupils are achieving and in identifying areas for school improvement.
- Develop further the procedures to evaluate pupils' progress towards challenging targets set each year.

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.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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?	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	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**

1 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of The Bellbird Primary School, Sawston CB22 3GB

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy your new school and, together with your parents, think that it is a happy and friendly place - and we agree.

We were pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you to learn. It was interesting to talk to school councillors about how you are helping to set up your new school, such as helping to choose its name. You told us that you enjoy your work and the range of extra-curricular activities, especially the music and sport. We think that many of you learn well and Mrs. Corral and her staff are working hard to try to help you to learn as well as possible. Many of you enjoy the good teaching you receive in some of your lessons. We have asked Mrs Corral and her staff to try to help you learn even better by making more of your lessons interesting and challenging, especially those of you who are good at learning. Some of you are getting a better understanding of how to make your work better and are keen to achieve your learning targets. We have asked the teachers to help all of you to understand what you need to do to improve your work and would encourage you to try really hard to achieve as well as you can. We have also asked your school to continue to track your progress carefully and check how well you are doing regularly to help anyone who is not doing as well as they could. We would also like them to provide more opportunities for teachers who are responsible for particular subjects to see where they can help you achieve even better.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school and we hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Best wishes

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector