

Bitham Brook Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126291
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	360037
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	271
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Longley
Headteacher	John Kimberley
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 14 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Inspectors also met with pupils, various staff members, three members of the governing body and the school improvement partner and had informal discussions with a few parents. They observed the school's work and analysed the documentation relating to safeguarding, the monitoring of teaching and the data about pupils' progress. They also analysed the responses from 102 parental questionnaires from parents and carers as well as those from staff and pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The apparent discrepancy between the school's own judgements about its effectiveness and indications in national data; to establish the true position with regards to the overall progress of pupils, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Whether changes in staffing and leadership systems are providing a strong and sustainable capacity for the school to develop well into the future and ensure all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Whether previous underachievement and falling attainment have now been fully stemmed and whether any variability in provision is having an adverse effect on further improvement.

Information about the school

The school is broadly similar in size to other primary schools nationally. There is a higher proportion of girls than boys. There is a lower proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals than found nationally. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with that nationally. Most of this group have communication, language and writing difficulties. Since 2008 the school has gained a number of awards including the foundation level International Award for Schools, Artsmark and a further validation of Activemark. The school has a number of mixed- age classes and Year 5 is split between three classes.

Since the last inspection the school has experienced significant turbulence at all teaching and management levels

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. There are a number of strengths in the pastoral aspects of pupils' development. Pupils behave well, are courteous and respect one another. They take a pride in being given responsibility and have a good understanding of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. Their understanding of the diversity of different cultures and their work within the wider community are particularly good.

Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes. They settle quickly and progress well. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils' academic attainment is broadly in line with that expected for their age. Through the rest of the school, pupils in other years make satisfactory but variable progress. Attainment in national tests fell in 2008 and 2009. The 2010 national test results show a dramatic improvement in both English and mathematics, most notably in the proportion of pupils achieving the age-expected Level 4 in mathematics. These Year 6 pupils had made good progress from their Year 2 national tests. Those in the present Year 6 are in line to reach generally similar levels. More widely though, the school's data show that the rate of progress varies from year group to year group and class to class. In some cases, while being satisfactory, it is not high enough to sustain good progress each year. This is because the quality of teaching, ranging from satisfactory to good, is inconsistent across the school

Strengths in teaching include the good relationships and behaviour management and a commitment to using good assessment information to provide appropriate one-to-one interventions for individual pupils. The reason for the inconsistency is, in part, due to how work is not sufficiently well adapted when there are different age groups within one class. When this happens, there is less challenge. In addition, curriculum planning does not always build accurately on pupils' previous learning and experiences. This was exemplified by one pupil who pointed out that they had covered the same text last year and in another case where the impact of an animated film was partly lost because pupils had used it before.

The school is calm and orderly because pupils are cared for and supported well. Most pupils speak confidently and listen attentively. For example, in the Year 2 class assembly, attended by a good turnout of parents and carers, pupils had learnt their words, were able to re-enact the 'Rainhill trials' using large models they had made and sung with gusto. The rest of the school listened with interest and obvious enjoyment and, when finished, some older pupils maturely helped the youngest children to file out.

The governing body provide good levels of support and ably challenge the direction of school improvement. They play an important part in ensuring a generally accurate self-evaluation of the school. Leaders at all levels have looked in detail at their areas of responsibility and have produced thorough individual self-evaluations. At subject-leader level, the good understanding of individual pupil progress is not yet fully developed to

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include an analysis of how different groups of pupils are progressing, and how well the pupils in the same year group are doing in different classes. Senior leaders are rightly aware of this problem and that the progress from a previous year must be sustained. They are developing ways of achieving this. While this is at an early stage, progress data confirm that this is starting to happen. The recent rise in attainment of pupils, the maintaining of good personal development of pupils and the work started to reduce the variability in academic progress all indicate a satisfactory capacity to improve into the future.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the consistency in the progress of pupils in English and mathematics by:
 - analysing and evaluating the progress made by individual year groups in different classes and providing support for those who are not doing as well as they could
 - developing curricular planning and classroom practice to ensure that pupils in a year group are given similar opportunities, experiences and challenge based accurately on their previous learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders including that of the middle leaders by:
 - undertaking an analysis of all different groups and developing planning and teaching methods that will eliminate any potential underachievement
 - using the information gathered to produce a measurable school improvement plan that will provide continuity of achievement through the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils start Year 1 attaining levels that are broadly similar to those expected for their age. They make steady progress through Years 1 and 2, gaining a better understanding of language and numeracy and good social skills. They have good technology skills and artwork is of a high standard. They interact well, such as in one class where pupils readily worked in 'buddy pairs' to discuss their ideas about sequencing a story. By Year 2, pupils have above-average reading skills and average skills in writing and mathematics. This satisfactory progress continues through Years 3 to 6 but varies between classes and years. Progress accelerates in the upper years, especially in Year 6. This is because in this year group, work is much better focused on driving up attainment of the year group as a whole. For example, there are specifically focused lessons aimed at this year group as well as interventions for those who are falling behind. Through the whole school, while pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the progress they should, pupils in the lower half of the middle-ability group do not do as well. This is because their needs have not been identified so closely and group interventions are not so effective.

Pupils' attendance is above average. They take a pride in their contribution to the local, national and international community, a fact recognised by their international award. For example, they are presently trying to establish e-mail contact with a school in Lusaka and, having realised that the children at this school have no internet, are raising money to provide it. Pupils' responsibilities in understanding safety extend to them being in charge,

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through the 'School Seniors' in Year 6, of entry and exit points during the school day and looking after younger pupils; something they take great care about. It is examples such as these that indicate that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of pupils is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers engender good relationships with their class so that pupils work well together. When working independently pupils remain 'on task' and try their best because of good behaviour management and a variety of different methods used by teachers to make lessons interesting. For example, one older class were keen to work out different types of averages using mode, median and range and in another pupils thought hard about the emotions that were being conveyed in a film. Teachers try and give a sense of realism by giving pupils examples that they can relate to and that connect with a theme. However, teaching and learning overall are not better than satisfactory because the quality of challenge for pupils varies. In the best cases all groups and ages in the mixed-age classes are provided with work that suits them. On occasions, pupils in the same age group do not get similar experiences. For example, some go on one visit while others do not. Teachers try to make sure that there is a suitable and ongoing development of skills but this is not analysed carefully enough between year groups to ensure that progress is continuous. Satisfactory marking provides pupils with praise and an idea of how to improve. They can

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confidently talk about the level they are working at and the targets needed to improve on this.

The curriculum provides a good range of additional opportunities with visits, visitors, clubs and practical work. In recognition of the successful creative elements, the school has gained an Artsmark and Activemark award. The curriculum provides particularly well for the pastoral development of pupils. However, the analysis of the opportunities to develop each subject is not evaluated well enough. This means that skills are repeated in different years, without a significant level of progression in some cases, and pupils do not always build on what has gone before.

The care, guidance and support for pupils is a strength of the school. In the responses to the questionnaires almost all pupils say they feel cared for and know who to go to with any problems. Family support is good, particularly for vulnerable pupils. One parent wrote about how well her child had settled since coming from another school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The experienced headteacher leads an effective team of senior leaders who have, through their monitoring, correctly identified some weaknesses in teaching and are taking action to improve these by close evaluation of pupils' progress and supporting the development of less-experienced teachers. This has successfully addressed the falling attainment from previous years. Senior leaders also rightly understand that not enough has been done to completely improve the progress of all groups of pupils, so ensuring that this good progress is sustainable into the future. Middle leaders have good opportunities to develop their own areas. However, their strategic understanding of how different groups are doing across the school is not developed sufficiently. As a result, whole-school improvement planning lacks preciseness and not all staff have a clear idea of the part they need to play in driving forward improvement.

Members of the governing body have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in moving the school forward through a good programme of visits to the school and directing resources to sustain improvements. They align the work of the governing body closely to school development and provide good support and extensive challenge. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and effective as a result of the systematic work of the headteacher, staff and governing body.

The school has made satisfactory progress in promoting equality by tackling gaps in attainment and achievement between girls and boys but rightly recognises that there is

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more to be done to improve pupils' overall progress from one year to the next. There is no evidence of any discrimination, a fact supported by pupils' comments. The school has a range of partnerships which give opportunities for sport, staff development and gifted and talented pupils as well as support for the more vulnerable. This effectively extends what the school can provide. There is good engagement between the school and parents and carers, who say that their children are 'doing well'.

Pupils' good understanding of cultural diversity is a significant improvement since the last inspection. An audit and evaluation of the provision has meant that there are now meaningful links with a school in Zambia, involving reciprocal staff visits and fund raising by the pupils. A further link is being developed with an urban school in the Midlands.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress from a wide range of different starting points because they are taught well by adults who have a good understanding of the needs of this age group. Children are interested in the planned activities; for example, the town and country mouse story was used well to investigate and make waterproof hats and engage in imaginative role play to go on a picnic. These experiences enable children to be fully involved in learning, with a good balance of tasks led by adults and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. For example, an adult supported a small group of children exploring objects in peat and using a magnifier to examine them more closely. Children could explain exactly what the magnifier did and the features of the stones, bulbs and small vegetables they were finding. Children play well and safely together, organising themselves in small groups to explore length and how to build a rocket and fire station with construction kits, and also writing labels for what they had made. Assessment is used very effectively to plan for and engage children in the next steps in their learning.

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The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is led well and the leader mentors less experienced staff effectively. Relationships are strong and contribute well to developing the setting. Opportunities for outdoor learning are more limited and the leadership is working on ways of ensuring this happens. Children's welfare is a top priority and all individuals are well cared for, establishing good relationships with parents and carers, who comment about how much their children enjoy coming to school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that they are happy with their child's experience at school. They are positive about most other areas. There is some concern amongst a few parents and carers that behaviour is not dealt with well. This was not the finding of the inspection. Pupils do behave well and the processes and support to ensure that lessons are not disrupted are secure and effective.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bitham Brook Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 102 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 271 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	46	45	53	52	3	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	49	51	50	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	42	41	58	57	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	46	52	51	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	44	56	55	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	34	63	62	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	32	62	61	7	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	26	61	60	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	34	65	64	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	27	56	55	15	15	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	21	74	73	5	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	34	64	63	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	37	61	60	2	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bitham Brook Primary School, Westbury BA13 3UA

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We were pleased to talk to so many of you and hear your views about Bitham Brook. We have said that you are receiving a satisfactory quality of education but that there are also some particular strengths. You should be proud of the way you behave at school and how well you settle to your work. Here are a few things we have said are other positive features.

- You told us you enjoy school and we have reported about the good attitudes you have about your learning. You certainly take responsibility seriously and we could see lots of examples such as your work with children in other countries and the work of the 'School Seniors'. Keep it up!
- The youngest pupils get off to a good start in the Reception classes.
- By Year 6 you are generally working at levels that we would expect for your age; some of you do better. You make satisfactory progress through each year but this speeds up towards the top end of the school.
- You are cared for and supported well ♦ something that you agreed with.
- Your teachers plan interesting activities for you and you enjoy the many varied things you have to do.

Your teachers and leaders are working on some things to make your school even better. We have said that we would like them to:

- make sure that all of you have similar opportunities regardless of which class you are in. This will help all of you to make better progress, particularly in English and mathematics
- have a closer look at how well those of you in mixed-age classes are doing and to make sure anybody who needs help will get the right support.

Finally we hope you will continue to work hard and help everybody make sure your school becomes one of the best.

Yours sincerely

David Collard

Lead inspector

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