

Beechcroft Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126210
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	360021
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Clive Dunn

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Deakin
Headteacher	Lynne Harper
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons taught by 11 staff and saw a range of support programmes for small groups and individuals. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, staff and governors and they spoke with parents and carers. They observed the school's work including playtime, lunchtime and assembly and looked at planning, monitoring, a range of policy documents and records, minutes of governing body meetings and a range of pupils' work and assessments. They also analysed 68 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and 19 from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How effectively the curriculum and teaching of reading are accelerating rates of progress in order to raise attainment, particularly for the least able pupils.
- How successfully tracking information is used to adapt provision in order to raise the achievement of different groups of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How effectively leaders and managers at all levels are using robust self-evaluation to inform sharply focused plans in order to promote improvement.

Information about the school

Beechcroft is a larger than the average infant school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, most of these have moderate learning difficulties, but fewer pupils than average have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils are mainly of White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is rising steadily and is currently just above average. The school has a breakfast club, managed by the governing body.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Beechcroft Infant School is a good school. It is highly valued by pupils and their parents and carers, whose overwhelmingly positive views reflect the school's outstanding success in engaging them in their children's education. 'I cannot compliment the school highly enough' was a typical sentiment. Pupils demonstrate their enjoyment through the excellent contribution they make within and beyond the school. During the inspection, for example, the 'Busy Bees' from Year 2 were making sure the birds had enough seed and water in the snow, while Year 1 pupils went carol singing in a local residential care home. Pupils' mature, responsible behaviour and the readiness with which they respond to staff expectations are significant features of the welcoming ethos and environment of the school. However, staff sometimes miss opportunities to use this positive behaviour to best effect in lessons by encouraging pupils to work collaboratively or independently.

Another very important aspect of the school's work that is outstanding is the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children make significant gains in their learning because adults are highly skilled at observing and assessing their abilities and planning for the next stage in their development. Excellent links with a range of pre-school settings, one example of the school's outstanding partnerships, support very smooth transition. From Year 1 onwards pupils make good progress, so that when they leave attainment levels are above average. The most able pupils in particular do exceptionally well, and the proportions of pupils who attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics are significantly above average. Teachers have high expectations and very effectively challenge these learners. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 2, the most able pupils were able to identify their own mistakes because the teacher allowed them the opportunity to extend and explore their answers in order to explain their thinking.

Action taken to accelerate progress in reading has been effective and progress in this area is good. The school also uses thorough tracking and analysis of the performance of different groups well to target support. This has had a particularly positive impact on improving rates of progress to a good level for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils achieve particularly well through specific programmes and support groups. However, teachers do not always use assessment information to match the work closely enough to the needs of all groups, so they are sometimes reliant on adult support in order to succeed. Good arrangements for transition, pupils' above average basic skills and a good level of competence with information and communication technology prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life. However, although attendance is average and improving, the school does not always intervene early enough when individual pupils' attendance begins to dip.

School leaders, including the governing body, have made good use of their own self-evaluation systems, together with external recommendations, to continue to develop the

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school. Thoroughly analysed data, as well as the views of pupils and their parents and carers, also inform effective plans for improvement. Through this, good or outstanding performance in all key areas has been sustained and, most notably, the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen significantly. Taking all of this into account, there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate rates of progress for all groups to the excellent levels already achieved by the most able pupils, by:
 - making the best use of all opportunities to engage pupils more actively in their learning ?
 - ensuring that pupils, particularly those who are least able, do not become too dependent on adult support ?
 - using the recently introduced assessment procedures to ensure that tasks are set at the right level of challenge for all pupils.
- Raise the level of attendance by using the highly positive relationships with parents and carers to tackle attendance issues at an earlier stage.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Consistently good achievement means that children's limited skills and understanding when they start school rise to the above average levels seen in lessons for the oldest pupils. Keen to do well in lessons, pupils are particularly purposeful and engaged when given opportunities to work without direction from an adult. For example, in a lesson about instructions, pupils achieved well working collaboratively to read, sort and order different instructions. These regular opportunities to practise reading skills in a range of lessons support the improving rates of progress in this area. In another example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson pupils had to solve word problems. They responded enthusiastically to the high level of challenge and together they achieved success in ordering the jumbled-up problem, discarding irrelevant information, working out what the question was and finding the correct answer. However, pupils do not always have sufficient time to work on independent tasks in order to achieve as well as they could. Through targeted support activities, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are gaining in confidence. The opportunity to work in small groups on tasks closely matched to their ability enables them to make accelerated progress. Activities such as the 'phonic hunt', through which they develop their knowledge of letter sounds, motivate them to achieve well.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They participate well in the range of activities the school has to offer, and the most popular extra-curricular activities are those involving physical activity. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to keep healthy. They engage well with special theme days and activities to promote their cultural awareness, though there are too few opportunities across the curriculum to secure a deeper understanding of different cultures. Through lessons that draw good links to real-life experiences, pupils learn to reflect on the world around them. They are respectful and considerate of others' feelings and develop good social skills.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

There are good arrangements for the care of pupils, particularly interventions to support pupils' social and emotional needs as well as their academic development. The breakfast club effectively prepares those who attend for the day's learning, through provision of a healthy breakfast and purposeful activities. The considerable thought and careful planning that go into smooth transition throughout the school contribute well to pupils' good achievement. Strong relationships at all levels ensure that pupils know who to go to if they have a concern. Well-targeted support for the pupils whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable, including close involvement of parents and carers in their learning and provision, is effective in improving outcomes. However, the school does not always initiate these procedures at an early enough stage, for example to promote better attendance.

Newly introduced assessment procedures are beginning to involve pupils more in reviewing their own learning. For example, in an English lesson, pupils in Year 2 were able to assess with considerable accuracy their own writing to check that it contained a number of features identified by the teacher. Marking is beginning to show pupils how to improve their work but this is not done consistently well across all classes. Excellent partnerships provide a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Lessons draw good links to the real world and teachers are thoughtful to make learning interesting for pupils.

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For example, they made a number of imaginative adaptations during the inspection to make the most of the way children were obviously excited by the fact that it was snowing. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their basic skills across the curriculum, particularly reading, writing and information and communication technology. Planning is detailed and thorough and builds on what pupils have learned before. Teachers focus well on what it is they want pupils to learn and share this effectively with pupils. However, adults sometimes lead too much of the lesson, particularly during introductions and focus group tasks, rather than encouraging pupils to develop their independence.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders carry out extensive analysis and evaluation of the performance of different groups. They understand well the strengths in teaching that result in these outcomes. Using this information, leaders and managers at all levels have effectively targeted unevenness in progress between different groups and, as a result, gaps are closing. The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Racist incidents are very rare and dealt with robustly so they do not reoccur. The governing body takes good account of the views of pupils and their parents and carers in supporting and challenging the school. Plans to further improve the school identify the right areas but are not always sharply focused enough to promote more rapid improvement. However, strong involvement of staff and governors at all levels in the creation of these plans helps secure the drive and ambition to implement them. One benefit to this distribution of responsibility has been the completion of an extremely comprehensive audit of the school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion. This has already led to adjustments in the curriculum that have had a positive impact in promoting pupils' international awareness. The school has appropriate plans to consolidate this by giving pupils the chance to engage with other children in different contexts nationally.

Excellent partnerships with other agencies contribute to the school's good safeguarding procedures. Training of staff in issues relating to pupil safety is good and in turn, pupils learn how to keep safe and deal with risk. For example, the school council has made a film to show other pupils how to play safely on equipment.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a highly stimulating learning environment, both inside and outside. In addition, adults use their excellent knowledge of children's learning and development very effectively to assess and plan activities to meet a range of needs. As a result, children make exceptional progress across all the areas of learning. They understand how to stay safe, for example in the snow, and quickly develop good levels of independence in their learning, including in solving problems. For example, a group of boys worked extremely well together to use spades and wheelbarrows to clear snow from their large construction blocks so they could use them to build something. This is typical of how purposeful children are in their play and, supported by interaction with adults that moves their learning forward, why they do so well. Relationships are caring and supportive and the children are quickly learning how to get along. Thorough planning effectively balances these opportunities for exploration with an exceptionally well-organised range of focused activities led by adults. These also provide a range of imaginative experiences to support excellent achievement. For example, children were highly motivated by the opportunity to do some 'experimental cooking', creating their own recipes from a range of supplied ingredients. Excellent use of letter-sound mats and clipboards and pencils for children to write lists of what they were putting into their creations ensured the activity made the most of all opportunities for learning. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a strong commitment to ensuring this excellent progress through rigorous observations, assessments and tracking. Accurate self-evaluation, effective teamwork and continuing staff training are helping to secure a consistency of approach across all early years' classes.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were unanimous in expressing their overall satisfaction with what the school provides and that the school keeps their children safe. The overwhelming majority have positive views about most aspects of the school's work. A number of parents and carers also made comments that reflected high levels of satisfaction. Inspectors followed up the very few negative individual comments with the school, but there were no common or repeating themes.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beechcroft Infant 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 255 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	72	18	26	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	75	17	25	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	59	27	40	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	62	23	34	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	72	18	26	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	63	24	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	57	27	40	1	1	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)	35	51	24	35	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	68	17	25	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	53	28	41	0	0	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	50	29	43	1	1	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	44	65	23	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	72	19	28	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



3 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beechcroft Infant School, Swindon SN2 7QE

Thank you for the lovely welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you and we are very grateful to you for helping us find out all about your school. You clearly enjoy coming to school and we can see why ♦ it is a good school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Here are some of the other things we particularly liked.

- You make an excellent contribution to the school and local community, including through the jobs you do and singing outside of school.
- Your good progress in all subjects ensures that you are well prepared to move on to your next school when the time comes to leave.
- You work particularly well when given the chance to do something by yourself or with a friend, without being supported by an adult.
- You have good teachers who make sure you know what you are supposed to learn and use imaginative ideas to make it fun.
- All adults in the school care for you and help you to feel safe.
- Your school has good leaders who always try to make things even better for you. They have excellent links with others, including your parents and carers, which help you do so well.

To get even better, we have asked your school to help you all to do equally well by making sure the work is not too easy or too hard, and by getting you to work more often without being directly supported by an adult. We have also asked the school to work with your parents and carers sooner if for any reason you cannot come to school often enough to do well.

You can help by always doing your best when set a task to do, and by trying to come to school whenever you can.

Yours sincerely ♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

Clive Dunn Lead inspector

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