

# Bearbrook Combined School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110318
<b>Local Authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356718
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November 2010–1 December 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nina Bee

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	395
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tessa Haddon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Marcus Faulkner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Fowler Road Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire Aylesbury HP19 7QP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 488331
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Eighteen parts of lessons were observed. Fifteen teachers were seen. Discussions were held with pupils, staff, members of the governing body, local authority representatives and a small number of parents. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at external and internal monitoring evidence, school tracking data, teachers' planning and safeguarding documentation. The inspectors analysed questionnaires from 53 parents, 34 staff and 198 pupils.

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

- How well is children's progress tracked in Reception?
- To what extent has underachievement been eliminated and how well do all groups of pupils make progress as they move through Years 3 to 6?
- How effectively are the senior and middle leaders developing their skills of evaluation and using information to improve achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6?

## Information about the school

The majority of pupils come from White British families. Many different minority ethnic groups are represented, the largest being from Pakistani heritage. A few pupils come from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes.

**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

This is a welcoming and friendly school which provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. A strength is the effective way it cares for its pupils. Individual needs are well known by all adults and, consequently, pupils' personal and social needs catered for well. Pupils with specific needs are supported sensitively because of good links with external agencies. Pupils know they are important individuals and their behaviour is good and at times outstanding. By the time they leave, the school turns out polite and sensible young people who get on well with each other and truly know the meaning of respect. For example, pupils in Year 6 spoke confidently about the different religions they had studied and how it was important to respect the views of others. Others spoke excitedly about planning an Eid party. Pupils' cultural awareness is good. The school engages well with parents and carers and their responses show that they, too, feel that their children are safe and well looked after in school.

Children in Reception get off to a good start and achieve well. Progress is not so rapid in Years 1 to 6 but, in relation to their starting points, achievement is satisfactory. A few make good progress. In the past, some pupils have underachieved as they have moved through Years 3 to 6, because pupils' progress was not tracked effectively and there were weaknesses in teaching. As a result, too many pupils are still below age-related levels for English and mathematics in these classes. Attainment has been low at the end of Year 6 for the last five years. Nevertheless, the picture is more promising for the current Year 6. School data show that they are on course to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is the result of an effective tracking system which is now well established and quickly identifies those pupils who need intervention to get them back on course to reach their targets. These programmes are allowing pupils to make at least satisfactory and often good progress, as well as successfully getting them back on track in a short amount of time.

The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The headteacher and his team have a satisfactory understanding of what is needed for further improvement. Self-evaluation is generally accurate, and actions implemented so far have been successful. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the previous inspection and children are now making good progress. The system used to track pupils' progress and set targets is providing teachers with more precise information about pupils' learning. There still, however, remain concerns about how teachers are using this information to plan activities for individuals and groups. Activities in lessons are not always matched accurately to pupils' individual needs and abilities. Teaching is satisfactory overall but there is not enough that is good. Learning in literacy lessons and in other subjects in Years 1 to 6 is hampered for all abilities, because basic writing, spelling and presentation skills have not been sufficiently well developed in the past. Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always focus enough on what is needed to enable pupils to improve and reach their

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targets in literacy and mathematics. Interesting educational visits are planned within the satisfactory curriculum. These link well with the topics pupils are studying and so initiate, consolidate and reinforce learning.

The headteacher and his staff are committed to improving the teaching so that all teaching is good. Good practice is beginning to be shared and there have been successes, but there is still a way to go. Teaching is monitored by observations and looking at pupils' work, but the monitoring is not yet rigorous enough. Leaders and managers are not yet proficient in identifying key strengths and weaknesses in what is being taught in their subject areas, particularly through looking at pupils' work.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is always good in Years 1 to 6 by:
  - monitoring teaching effectively, identifying areas for improvement and evaluating effectiveness
  - sharing the good practice that is already in school
  - checking that teachers' planning and delivery of lessons address the needs of different abilities within each class
  - checking that teachers' marking informs pupils of what they need to do to improve and reach their targets
  - developing writing skills in Years 1 to 6 through focusing on improving basic sentence construction, letter formation, spelling and presentation in literacy lessons and in other subjects
  - enabling senior leaders and middle managers to become more proficient in identifying strengths and weaknesses in what is being taught in their subject areas through looking at pupils' work.

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

Attainment on entry to Reception is below average. Achievement is satisfactory overall and pupils enjoy coming to school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar gains to their classmates because they are supported sensitively. ♦ Pupils from Traveller families make similar progress, while in school, because their needs are quickly assessed. Those ♦ pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English do as well as the others because their progress in acquiring language skills is carefully tracked. When the whole class is given the same activity, learning is affected for more-able pupils who are not always sufficiently challenged. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with learning difficulties, sometimes find activities too difficult and are unable to finish their work.

Good learning was seen in a few lessons. In these lessons, teaching assistants contributed well to learning, and the activities pupils were given, as well as the questions they were asked, extended learning effectively. This was seen in a literacy lesson in Year 6 as pupils worked confidently on laptops as they researched information in order to write a

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biography about Roald Dahl. Pupils were keen to answer the teacher's questions because they were specifically targeted to the different abilities within the class. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' work shows that learning is not so effective when there is too little emphasis on developing basic writing, spelling and presentation skills as pupils write in literacy lessons and across the curriculum.

Pupils show a good awareness of the need to keep themselves safe, eat healthily and take regular exercise. Many extra-curricular activities promote physical education and pupils thoroughly appreciate these. Pupils speak maturely about what constitutes a healthy diet and the damage a poor diet does to the body. They contribute well to the school and the local community. Pupils feel proud to be members of the eco and school councils. These provide a respected forum for pupils to express their views. Pupils are elected to posts and as one pupil said, 'It is not a popularity contest, it is about who can do the job.' Pupils go into the local community to perform. For example, the choir sang in a local supermarket. Many events take place to raise funds for the less fortunate. A recent fund-raising event was to make and then distribute cookies for Children in Need. Academic skills are satisfactory but not so strong in Years 3 to 6. Overall, pupils are soundly prepared for their next school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

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

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## How effective is the provision?

Relationships between adults and pupils are good and result in pupils developing positive attitudes to learning. Lessons are generally well organised and resourced and teachers have high expectations regarding behaviour. Information and communication technology is used well by pupils and staff to support learning in many lessons. However, in satisfactory lessons, teachers lack focus in developing basic communication, literacy and numeracy skills, and assessment is not always used accurately to match activities to pupils' needs and abilities. For example, in literacy lessons seen in Years 2 and 6, more-able pupils learnt well as they answered questions confidently. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, contributed little because questioning did not address the different abilities within the class. In good lessons, teaching assistants contribute well to learning, activities are accurately pitched to pupils' abilities and needs and they are able to learn well. The best marking is both supportive and informative and shows pupils what they need to do to improve. When this takes place, pupils say that teacher's marking and working to the targets they are given helps them improve.

Good links with people in the local community and beyond enable the satisfactory curriculum to be enriched by visits out and visitors coming into school. Pupils spoke of the interesting visitor who came in and told them about the Fire of London. As one pupil said, 'It was amazing; he knew so much.' Personal, social and health education and the physical education programme contribute well to pupils' personal and social skills. The curriculum, however, does not allow all pupils to make good progress.

The level of care, guidance and support is good. Transition arrangements for when pupils enter and leave the school are well developed. There are good links with local schools and this aids transition. Families have good opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. Courses are run, for children and adults, to enable families to become more involved in their children's learning. 'Grin and Grumble' boxes are an effective way for pupils to register concerns. Pupils appreciate these and say that 'they really work'. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is ambitious for the pupils and, with the support of staff and governors, is determined to increase the pace of improvement. He has gained the respect of the parents and staff. Questionnaires show that staff morale is high. The way the senior and

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middle leaders monitor the work of the school is satisfactory. They have an accurate picture of how well individuals are performing and regular tracking of pupils' progress has almost eliminated any underachievement. Weaknesses in teaching, although identified, have not always been effectively addressed. All pupils are treated fairly and as individuals, especially regarding their personal and social needs. However, not all pupils are able to make good progress because of weaknesses in teaching, especially as they develop writing skills. The way the staff and governors have addressed community cohesion is satisfactory. Good local links and partnerships enhance pupils' understanding of the community around them. Staff recognise that global links are less well developed. Governance is satisfactory. Most of the governors have a clear understanding of the work of the school. As a result, they are able to soundly support and challenge the school. They successfully ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Transition procedures are good and enable children to settle quickly and develop positive attitudes to learning. Children's individual needs are known well because parents are well involved in providing necessary information about what their children can do. Attainment on entry to school is below average. Records are kept meticulously. Adults observe children's activities and use ongoing assessments to plan next steps accordingly. Learning and personal development are good. By the time they leave Reception, most children reach levels that are broadly average.

Children thrive socially and academically across all areas of learning. Good leadership ensures that provision is of good quality and is tailored effectively to meet individual requirements. There is a good balance between times when children are directed about what they should do next and when they can choose for themselves. For example, a



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group of children mixing snow and slush together were given paint to add to their mixture. An adult followed this up with good questioning that helped children to use their imagination to link colour to flavours of ice cream, extending their vocabulary well. All adults are good practitioners. They skilfully question children of all abilities to encourage speaking and listening. Good developments outside have ensured that all areas of learning are available to children who prefer this type of learning. Nevertheless, further improvement here is correctly seen as the next priority. For example, the surfacing is almost all asphalt, which means that the type of activities offered is restricted to a certain extent.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Almost all parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the work of the school and the efforts of the staff. All feel confident that the school keeps their children safe and parents are adamant that children enjoy coming to school. Overall, parents are generally happy with the experience their children receive at Bearbrook.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bearbrook Combined 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 53 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 395 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	79	11	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	72	15	28	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	35	66	17	32	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	49	24	45	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	31	58	20	38	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	68	14	26	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	60	18	34	3	6	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)	26	49	21	40	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	57	20	38	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	68	16	30	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	60	15	28	3	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	75	12	23	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	70	15	28	0	0	1	2

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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



1 December 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Bearbrook Combined School, Aylesbury HP19 7QP**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited recently. You go to a satisfactory school. This means some things are good and some things need to be improved.

These are the good things we found out about your school.

- Your behaviour is good.
- You are looked after and cared for well.
- You have good opportunities to learn about other religions and world celebrations. It was interesting to talk with you about your recent Eid party.
- You learn lots about how important it is to eat healthily and keep fit.
- You speak sensibly and confidently about how important it is to keep yourselves safe and know that adults will help you if you have a problem. We think your 'Grin and Grumble' boxes are a good idea and we know they work because you told us. ♦
- Adults arrange many visits out which link in well with what you are learning in your classes.

We have asked the school to do a few things to improve the education you receive.

- Check that teaching is always good by making sure that activities are carefully planned so that you all learn well and make good progress.
- Make sure that when teachers mark your work they show you what you need to do to improve your work and reach your targets.
- Check that you all learn how to write letters, numbers and then sentences properly and are encouraged to check the spellings of words and improve the way you present your work.
- Make sure that the leaders for English and mathematics look carefully at the work in your literacy and mathematics folders and books to make sure you are doing as well as you should be.

All of you can help by continuing to do your best.

Yours sincerely

Nina Bee

Lead inspector

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