

Bure Valley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120911
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358877
Inspection dates	30 September 2010–1 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derrol Waller
Headteacher	John Starling
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 12 lessons and eight teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, policies, planning, pupils' work and 82 parent questionnaires.

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

- The standards in mathematics and writing.
- The current attainment and progress especially of boys and less able pupils in all year groups.
- The impact of recent changes to lesson planning and the curriculum.
- The impact of recent changes to senior leadership.

Information about the school

This is an average sized junior school. A below average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. A well below average number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from mixed heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.

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

There have been significant changes at this school recently and these have resulted in rapid improvement in its good overall effectiveness. Changes to the organisation of Years 3 and 4, to assessment systems and the quality of teaching and learning, have been instrumental in improving the quality of education and pupils' good achievement. Aspects of the school's work are now outstanding. One reason for this is the challenging nature of target setting for individual pupils and also for the whole school. Staff evaluate their work accurately and honestly, and are very aware of aspects still requiring improvement. The school's success in areas that staff have worked on recently, such as standards in mathematics and links with parents, demonstrate its strong capacity for further improvement. Standards remain weaker in writing because the school is not building on pupils' good reading, speaking and listening skills to develop more opportunities for writing for a range of purposes and in different subjects.

The headteacher and senior staff provide the firm and decisive leadership that has been necessary during the recent improvement work, supported by the local authority. This has been successful and, although not yet reflected in all test results, it is evident in pupils' work and in lessons. The focus on learning has been very productive. Staff have created a new planning system which puts the emphasis on pupils' learning needs. In addition, the accommodation for pupils in Years 3 and 4 has been remodelled and the planning for those groups involves much closer collaboration between staff. Teachers and teaching assistants jointly plan and teach lessons that are increasingly of good quality. Staff training has helped to improve teachers' skills and the quality of teaching is now consistently at least good, and occasionally outstanding. Pupils talk very positively of how they are helped to learn and how much they enjoy school. This is also evident in their above average attendance. However, a number of initiatives are yet to have a full impact on the school's work, including the use of assessment, which is not fully consistent. The school does not monitor the impact of the marking of pupils' work or other feedback and there are times when the work provided is not challenging enough because staff have not made accurate enough use of assessment data.

The school has improved its procedures so that pupils feel exceptionally safe and their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and work well together, cooperating and collaborating on tasks. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Excellent partnerships have had a clearly positive impact on the provision. For example, local authority support has helped to raise standards and pupils' achievement and contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, excellent links and joint working with the other schools in the local cluster have had a very positive impact, as evident in the choir and orchestral work. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves healthy, however, a significant number still bring unhealthy snacks for break and lunch.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - giving pupils enough opportunities to write in other subjects and for different purposes
 - building on and using existing strengths in speaking, listening and reading to support pupils' writing skills.
- Embed the new assessment practices and use them to:
 - develop consistency of practice
 - monitor the quality of marking and feedback given to pupils
 - ensure sufficient challenge in activities, especially for the most able.
- Introduce a healthy eating programme to encourage pupils to adopt a more healthy diet.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are performing at broadly average standards when they start at the school. Although some start school with attainment that is above the national average, there are a significant proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Over recent years, standards at the end of Year 6 have not been high enough and achievement has not been as good as it should be. However, the recent changes introduced by the headteacher, and implemented by the deputy headteacher and senior leaders, have resulted in a dramatic improvement and current achievement and progress are good and improving. Pupils' clearly enjoy their work. One of the reasons for improved achievement is the way the school has worked on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes and these are now outstanding. However, pupils do not have a sufficiently strong understanding of the need for healthy eating.

In lessons, the good teaching and excellent behaviour and attitudes are resulting in good quality work and rising standards. This is especially evident in mathematics and for boys and less able pupils. In one outstanding lesson, Year 4 pupils used drama to show their understanding of the water cycle and reinforced their learning exceptionally well through independent activities. The work in pupils' books is of good quality, well presented and demonstrating good progress. Writing skills remain weaker and the staff do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use their skills in different ways. Data shows that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. There are no significant differences in the achievement of any groups of pupils including those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

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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	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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?

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because case studies show that the school makes every effort to include all pupils and to ensure that they make at least good progress. For those pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, the school supports their parents with good advice. Staff monitor the most vulnerable groups in detail every half term and their progress is checked. Teachers have a major input into the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they are better able to provide appropriate work to help pupils reach their targets. The arrangements when pupils move to different classes, especially into Year 3 and into Year 7, are outstanding.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is partly the result of effective links between subjects and of a lot of detailed work by staff to improve lesson planning. Teachers have focused on learning rather than teaching and lessons are now assessed by senior leaders more closely by the outcome of pupils' learning rather than the performance of the teacher. This has led to a distinct improvement in pupils' progress and at the same time more assessment data has become available. Assessment information has yet to be used as fully as it should be in providing all pupils with sufficiently challenging work. The staff have recently developed a marking and feedback policy but this is not being monitored for its success in helping pupils understand what they need to do to improve and what they have done well. Excellent opportunities are provided to

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enrich the curriculum, such as the art and design visit Year 5 made to Norwich Castle. These clearly support and extend pupils' experiences and learning.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides firm and decisive leadership. Together with the deputy headteacher and other senior staff, he demonstrates a clear ambition to continue raising standards and embed the recent improvements. All staff are very positive about the direction the school is taking and supportive of whatever work is needed to provide the best possible education for the pupils. Partnerships have been outstandingly successful in raising standards and improving provision. Local authority support and challenge have been used very well. Local schools work very closely together, sharing good practice and teachers are developing good systems for learning from each other. The headteacher has developed detailed, extensive tracking systems and these enable staff to see how successful their teaching is and how well different groups of pupils are doing.

The governing body has been much more effective in monitoring and challenging the school since the last inspection and its work now has a good impact on overall leadership. All statutory requirements are met, including those required to ensure pupils are safe and well cared for. Safeguarding is good because the school has developed a rigorous system for informing visiting teachers and instructors of requirements and of logging any concerns. All child protection systems are robust and effective. There are no significant inequalities in the provision and all pupils have full access to the curriculum as well as to wider enrichment and outside school activities. The school promotes community cohesion well, with outstanding strengths on a local level and satisfactory global understanding, although more remains to be done to extend pupils' understanding of how others live in different parts of this country.

A key feature of the leadership has been the use of training to improve and extend teachers' skills. In addition, leadership responsibilities have been distributed more widely and teachers have taken on more subject leadership roles. This means all staff have a bigger stake in the success of the school and contribute to its ongoing improvement.

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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	2
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

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are happy with their children's experience at the school. There is a clear feeling that the school is improving rapidly and that parents have confidence in the headteacher's ability to continue this improvement. They say the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. Most parents also say that the school prepares their children well for the future. The evidence of the inspection supports parents' and carers' positive views. A small minority think their children do not make sufficient progress. This was true in the past but current progress is good. A small number of parents would like more guidance on how they can help their children's learning although the school does now provide them with more information about the curriculum than used to be the case.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bure Valley 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 82 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 240 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	57	32	41	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	58	32	41	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	22	28	47	60	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	28	39	49	7	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	32	44	56	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	35	37	49	7	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	32	46	58	6	8	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)	36	46	34	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	33	43	54	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	27	44	56	4	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	28	41	52	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	44	38	48	3	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	46	35	44	2	3	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.



4 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bure Valley School, Norwich, NR11 6JZ

I am writing to thank you for the way you welcomed us to your school recently and for your help in showing us how good your school has now become. We especially enjoyed meeting and talking to some of you and we are very impressed with your behaviour. This enables the teachers to concentrate on providing you with interesting and imaginative activities.

You told us how safe you feel and we can see how well the school ensures that you are kept safe and secure. The school is also excellent at using the strong partnerships with the local authority and with other local schools to support your learning such as in the orchestra.

We have asked the school to do three things to help it get even better. Teachers need to do more to help you become better writers and to use your skills in different subjects. The school has introduced new systems for assessing your progress and learning. The teachers need to use this information more consistently to check on your learning, check how helpful their marking of your work is and to make sure the work you are given is challenging enough. The school also needs to do more to encourage you to eat healthily, and you can help with this by making healthy choices when you bring snacks and packed lunches.

Enjoy your time at Bure Valley and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector

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