

Beckers Green Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114794
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357617
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Christopher Parker

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	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Bojko
Headteacher	Helen Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twenty-one lessons, taught by 11 teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher and senior leaders, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 103 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well are boys, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to eligible for free school meals learning and making progress in writing?
- How effective are teaching, assessment and the curriculum in ensuring that the needs of different groups of pupils are met?
- How effective are monitoring and evaluation in providing an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and in establishing challenging targets for further improvement?

Information about the school

The school is a little larger than the average primary school. The large majority of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. The rest of the pupils are from many differing minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has fallen over the last few years, and is now similar to the national average. Over the same period, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has risen to over one third - well above the national average. Over the last year, there have been many changes to the teaching staff, and most members of the senior leadership have joined the school quite recently.

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****2**

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for the pupils. The headteacher, the new leadership team and the staff share a strong determination to raise attainment. The school has been successful in accelerating the pupils' progress and raising their attainment over the last year. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress and reaching average levels of attainment, although their achievement in writing is weaker than in reading and mathematics. These improvements are underpinned by the strong management systems that have been developed by the school through its involvement in the local authority's 'Leading the Learning' programme.

While some of the teaching is good, it is satisfactory overall because it is not sufficiently consistent to make sure that all pupils make good progress. Some lessons are well focused on what pupils need to learn next, but in others the tasks set for some groups are not matched well enough to the pupils' needs. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is not brisk enough. Consequently, the progress that the pupils make varies. Marking is done conscientiously, and the older pupils have clear targets. However, these are not established well enough to provide them with specific guidance from marking to help them to improve their next piece of work.

The good improvements to the curriculum and the well-established care, guidance and support for the pupils add to the momentum for further improvement. The carefully tailored support and good use of initiatives, such as one-to-one tuition, are helping some pupils to make faster progress and make up earlier lost ground. The school successfully ensures that steps are taken to fully include all pupils in the opportunities it provides.

Most pupils behave well. A few find it difficult to maintain concentration, and others are a little too reticent in lessons. These pupils have not developed the skills to work independently, or the confidence to contribute fully in lessons. Currently, this is a barrier to them making rapid progress. Others are keen to take on responsibilities in school and make a good contribution to the school community. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise.

The school is well placed to improve further. There have been marked improvements in provision for the youngest children, who are making good progress. This provides them with a strong foundation for future learning. The headteacher and senior leaders are rigorously monitoring the school's performance. This is a notable improvement since the last inspection, and ensures that they and the governing body, have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The tracking and analysis of the pupils' progress are detailed and sharply focused on the performance of key groups and individuals. The information gleaned from this analysis is used well in the frequent meetings that the headteacher and senior leaders have with the class teachers about each pupil's progress. These developments are making sure that the improvements made over

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the last year are sustained and built upon. Determined leadership and the considerable improvements already made show the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Up to 40% of 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?

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' learning so that they make consistently good progress and reach higher standards in writing, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is consistently good throughout the school
 - lessons always build on what groups of pupils already know and are able to do
 - marking identifies precisely how the pupils can improve their work
 - opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills across the curriculum are used effectively for them to practise and extend their skills.
- Develop the pupils' readiness to be actively involved in the learning opportunities provided for them, by:
 - developing their skills in solving problems
 - raising expectations of what they can achieve when working independently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In general, children start school with skills and abilities that are less well developed than those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They are doing well in the Reception Year. Although the number of children reaching the expected level for the start of Year 1 is lower than average, the proportion is rising.

The pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are making satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6. Although progress is improving, it is more consistent in reading and mathematics than it is in writing. For example, in a mathematics lesson seen during the inspection, the teacher engaged the pupils well with interesting and challenging tasks that extended their knowledge and understanding of handling data. As a result, they made good progress. On the other hand, in a writing lesson to develop the pupils' use and understanding of language, the tasks for some groups were not structured well enough and the pupils did not have the skills to tackle the problems facing them. Consequently, while some pupils made secure gains in their understanding, others were less successful. In other lessons, pupils did make good progress in their writing, but there is variation throughout the school.

The results of national tests in 2010, for pupils in Year 6, were similar to the national average, although deeper analysis shows a weaker performance in writing than in reading and mathematics. These results were a considerable improvement on previous years, when attainment was low and progress slow. The school now meticulously tracks the progress of every pupil. This shows that the improvements have been sustained, and some, although not yet the majority, are making good progress.

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The well focused small group teaching for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they make satisfactory progress. The school's detailed checking of their progress shows some pupils are making faster progress, particularly in reading. Very thorough analysis of the progress of boys and of those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and the effective steps taken by the school in view of its analyses ensure that the progress made by these groups is improving at the same rate as, and in some cases faster than, that of other pupils.

Some of the outcomes for pupils are good, because of the opportunities and enrichment they receive. The pupils talk enthusiastically about the responsibilities they are given as peer mediators, play leaders, 'eco-warriors' and school councillors. They say that bullying is very rare, and that should it occur it is dealt with immediately. Consequently, they feel safe at school. The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. Their cultural development is less well developed, but they readily take up the cultural opportunities provided through the curriculum and relationships among pupils from different ethnic backgrounds within the school are positive.

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	3
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	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?

The new teaching team, under the guidance of the senior leaders, is increasingly effective in helping pupils to make faster progress. While some lessons are good, there is not the level of consistency needed to rapidly accelerate the pupils' progress. In a lesson where

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pupils were exploring the features of non-fiction texts, the teacher's enthusiasm and drive ensured that the pupils became actively involved in the task and made good gains in their understanding of an explanation. However, in a lesson focused on improving sentences, while some groups of pupils maintained good progress when supported by adults, others did not have the perseverance to work independently at a good pace, and their progress, consequently, slowed.

The teachers are making increasingly good use of their assessments to plan the next stage in the pupils' learning, set them targets and establish higher expectations. Here, again, there are elements of inconsistency that are also reflected in the marking of the pupils' work. While teachers are identifying what the pupils need to do to improve, the guidance which they provide is not always sharply focused or followed up in subsequent work.

The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being. For example, a broad range of clubs and after-school activities are very well attended and appreciated by pupils. The school has reviewed and developed its curriculum to meet better the interests and needs of the pupils. The curriculum increasingly links subjects in order to create themes that interest and motivate all groups of pupils and, particularly, to help boys to engage fully in activities. While opportunities for pupils to write in a range of contexts are increasing, they are not always used to full effect for pupils to practise and extend their skills. The use of carefully focused activities for small groups and individuals is helping to accelerate the progress of those with gaps in their knowledge and skills, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Developments in one-to-one tuition have proved particularly beneficial.

The good support that the school provides for pupils results in them feeling safe and having a good awareness of how to stay fit and healthy. It is also carefully targeted to help those who experience difficulties. The school points to considerable success in removing the barriers to learning experienced by individual pupils, both in managing and improving their behaviour and in helping others to overcome gaps in their learning. The school has rigorous procedures to encourage good attendance and has considerably reduced persistent absence.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has, with considerable determination, created a strong leadership team with the ambition and enthusiasm needed to build on the marked improvements achieved over the last year. The headteacher has established strong systems and approaches to make sure that the school continues to improve. The leadership team places the progress

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of all groups at the heart of its drive for further improvement, but is particularly well focused on the progress of boys, those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The assessment coordinator's incisive analysis allows the senior team to check thoroughly on the progress of these groups and that of all individuals. In addition, the deputy headteacher, who leads the school's inclusion strategy, plays an important role by successfully helping pupils with particular difficulties to overcome barriers to learning, but good progress by all pupils has yet to be achieved.

The school finds it hard to recruit and retain a full governing body. Nevertheless, the Chair of the Governing Body and a small core of its members contribute beyond what might be expected of them to ensure that the school is challenged and supported. They work with the headteacher to identify priorities for improvement, which are set out very clearly in the detailed and well-focused plans for improvement. Teaching and learning are well led and managed by senior leaders, who hold their colleagues to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. Consequently, teaching is rapidly improving. Parents and carers are kept informed about the work of the school and their children's progress. 'Structured conversations' with the parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are a noteworthy development in extending links with them. However, some events to keep parents and carers up to date about the curriculum are not as well attended as the school would like.

Arrangements to make sure that pupils are as safe as possible are good. The school's security policy is clear and fully implemented. The staff are well trained and the school makes good use of the services of specialist agencies when needed. The school has a satisfactory policy for promoting community cohesion. However, plans to engage with a range of community groups beyond the school are at an early stage of implementation.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The children who entered the school this year are making good progress. This is because the smooth transition and induction arrangements help them to settle quickly. Productive partnerships with parents and carers are established through home/school diaries. The adults encourage the children's learning, and monitor their choices carefully. Each stage in a child's development is recorded, and is increasingly being used to inform planning and to help the children move to the next step in their learning. Over the last year, the teachers have placed greater emphasis on developing the children's knowledge of letters and the sounds they make. The Early Years Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 leader has monitored the impact of these changes into Year 1 and found marked improvement in the development of the pupils' early reading and writing skills. Lively teaching ensures that activities are interesting, and good use of resources helps the children to develop their concentration and to persevere. The children have well-resourced opportunities to explore the world around them, develop their language and number skills, and extend their personal development. This was very evident when they were exploring clocks in the classroom and 'building houses' in the copse. The children clearly enjoy learning, and their curiosity and independence are developing well. The use of the outdoor area is a particularly strong feature of the school's provision for the youngest children. This enhances the children's ability to work and play together, although occasionally activities are too tightly guided by adults.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2
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

Over one third of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. This is a little higher than usual. A number of parents and carers added comments to their replies. Most of these were positive and remarked favourably on the improvements made by the headteacher, the care and support provided by the staff and the good progress made by their children.

A very small number of parents and carers expressed concerns about bullying. Inspectors talked to groups of pupils about this. The pupils felt that any incidents were rare and were dealt with swiftly. Several pupils and parents and carers felt that the school did not deal appropriately with misbehaviour. Inspectors also talked to the pupils about this, and observed behaviour in lessons and on the playground. The pupils say that most of their peers behave well, but there are occasions when pupils fall out on the playground. Inspectors observed a few incidents of unsettled behaviour but, on all occasions, it was dealt with quickly. Generally, pupils behave well when they are moving around the school,

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and in the playground they are energetic and engaged in the activities led by adults and play leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beckers Green 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 289 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	50	47	46	3	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	59	39	38	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	53	51	44	43	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	45	48	47	7	7	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	47	46	48	47	7	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	43	42	48	47	11	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	42	52	50	7	7	1	1
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)	38	37	52	51	7	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	40	50	49	9	9	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	34	51	50	6	6	6	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	34	61	59	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	43	52	51	4	4	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	48	47	47	46	7	7	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



9 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beckers Green Primary School, Braintree CM7 3PR

Thank you for making me and my colleagues welcome when we inspected your school recently. I am particularly grateful to those of you who spent some of your playtime and lunchtime talking to us about your school and to those who completed questionnaires. You told us that you thought your school had improved over the last year or two. The adults care for you well and, as a result, you feel safe in school. You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and keep fit, and make a good contribution to the school community as peer mediators, play leaders, 'eco-warriors' and school councillors.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education. The headteacher and teachers are working hard to help you to make faster progress and reach higher standards in English and mathematics. Over the last year, they have been successful in helping you to make better progress in reading and mathematics, and this year they are concentrating their efforts on helping you to reach higher standards in writing. They are right to focus on writing, so I have asked them to push ahead and to make sure that lessons always build on what you already know, so that you can make good progress. I have also asked them to make sure that when teachers mark your work, they tell you exactly how you can improve your next piece of writing. You can help by always thinking about your teacher's comments when you are doing your work.

You can also help the teachers by playing a full part in lessons. I have asked them to help and encourage you to become more independent, so that when you are working without a teacher or an adult you are able to persevere and make good progress.

I enjoyed being in your school, and hope that in the future it is successful in helping you to achieve as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector

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