

Bitterne CE(VC) Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116339
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	357945
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Mick Pye

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cheryl Hubbard
Headteacher	Andy Peterson
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed eight lessons and briefly visited one other lesson. A total of eight teachers were seen. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers and held meetings with members of the governing body, pupils and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. The school's development plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governing body documentation and school policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the safeguarding of pupils, were scrutinised. Inspectors also looked at completed questionnaires returned by pupils, staff and those from 91 parents and carers.

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

- The quality of the teaching and the curriculum in mathematics and whether pupils, particularly girls, are making sufficient progress in that subject.
- Whether leaders and managers monitor and evaluate in sufficient depth the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, pupils with gifts and talents and those few pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- The way the school monitors the success of any support and intervention provided.
- The quality of teachers' marking, and whether pupils, particularly boys in writing and girls in mathematics, have a clear idea about how to improve their work.

Information about the school

The largest group of pupils in this average size junior school are of White British heritage. The next largest minority ethnic group are pupils from Mixed White and Asian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, although the number with a statement of special educational need is below average. The main groups have behavioural, emotional, social, and/or moderate learning difficulties. A very small number speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. There are above average numbers of boys. The school has been nationally recognised through gaining the national Healthy School and Basic Skills awards.

The school has formed a 'soft federation' with the local infant school which is situated on the same site. An independent pre- and after-school club is situated on the school site. This is independent of the federation and is subject to a separate inspection.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. In many areas there is evidence of improvement, for example in aspects of pupils' personal development. Pupils make an excellent contribution to their community, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding, as is their attendance. A Year 3 parent wrote, 'Our daughter can't wait to get to school every day. She feels safe, secure and respects her teachers and school friends.' Another strong aspect is the effective use of assessment techniques to aid pupils' progress. Pre-assessments are marked and provide pupils' targets for the next lesson, while, at the same time, giving teachers an understanding of the extent of pupils' prior knowledge. This is undoubtedly contributing to the improving rate of progress of pupils, which, given their starting points, is satisfactory. This includes pupils with gifts and talents and those from minority ethnic groups. Attainment, overall, by the end of Year 6 in the 2010 national tests, is average. Boys' writing is a weaker element, as it is on entry. Nevertheless, the gap between their performance and that of girls is closing as a result of school actions. These include changes to the curriculum to provide them with more opportunities to write about things that motivate them.

Teaching is satisfactory. Again, there are signs of improvement, with lessons observed supporting the school's findings that there are increasing numbers of good and sometimes outstanding lessons. Positive relationships result in pupils wanting to get involved in lessons. Teachers use time targets well to focus pupils' efforts. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in teaching remain: when teachers plan work to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities they too often identify tasks for pupils rather than the learning expected. This results in progress dipping for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their progress, while satisfactory, is, for a few, not always as fast as could be expected. In lesson planning the objectives are, on occasions, too general and consequently 'cap' the learning. Plans do not always show sufficiently what skills are required to meet the lesson objective.

The satisfactory curriculum is currently under review. In newly developed themes, for example Superheroes, links between subjects allow pupils to transfer skills and knowledge. These are insufficiently developed, and planning is inconsistent in showing where different subjects support progress in literacy and mathematics.

Self-evaluation is accurate and consequently appropriate development issues are identified. A detailed plan focuses highly on improving progress in literacy and numeracy. Its impact is reviewed regularly and is seen in improvements to teaching and pupils' progress. The quality of subject development plans varies, with some objectives insufficiently refined, making it difficult to judge the success of any changes introduced. Subject plans insufficiently identify how they support the priorities in the whole-school development plan. The good depth of analysis at the whole-school level is not always

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replicated at the subject level where subject leaders do not consistently analyse the progress of different pupil groups. Therefore, not all have a sufficiently clear strategic view of the pupils' progress in their subject areas.

Governors meet their statutory obligations and produce good school improvement reports, for example on aspects of finance. The school is meeting or exceeding some challenging school targets, and this supports a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement. Other evidence includes improving progress levels, and the successful school actions regarding behaviour and in the high level of pupils' attendance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress in English and mathematics, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, through eradicating the inconsistencies in teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers plan work that challenges pupils of different abilities
 - ensuring that lesson objectives do not limit learning and that the skills and knowledge needed for pupils to achieve the objective are made clear.
- Sharpen the skills of subject leaders and managers by ensuring that their:
 - analysis of assessment data is rigorous and that they have a clear understanding of the progress of pupils and pupil groups
 - action plans clearly show how their subject is going to support the whole-school development plan, and that they have measurable success criteria against which their effectiveness can be judged.
- Develop more precise links between subjects so as to make learning more real for pupils and to show more clearly how subjects are supporting pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils behave well, enjoy learning and achieve satisfactorily. In a Year 5 English lesson, pupils enjoyed the challenge of devising an opening paragraph for a legend. Pupils showed very high levels of respect, listening carefully in a Year 6 mathematics lesson while individuals described their ideas about number problem patterns, and took a pride in their work. In a literacy support session the small group of pupils took great delight in writing sentences with 'ou' words, like 'through'.

Pupils feel safe, and appreciate the opportunity to air any concerns in the classroom 'worry' boxes. The result of the national award work is seen in the pupils' good knowledge of how to keep healthy. One pupil said of school meals, 'They keep our brains healthy because the food is good.' Pupils recognise the benefits of cycling or scooting, complementing this with recognition of the importance of the cycle test and crash helmets. On occasions they fail to put into practice their knowledge of keeping healthy. The school council feels fully involved and is proud of its efforts regarding play equipment and in helping to ensure safe playground activity. 'Junior Apprentices' react well when aiding the site manager in overseeing the school environment.

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Pupils show high levels of reflection during assemblies. They show empathy with Ugandan schoolchildren who do not have the information and communication technology (ICT) equipment they have. The pupils adapt extremely well to various social occasions, for example when they move from lessons to assembly. They have an excellent awareness of, in their own words, the need to 'respect' others and that 'consequences' arise from misbehaviour. They have good global awareness. They cite examples of peers who are Muslim and Hindu and are aware of similarities and differences regarding faiths. Currently, pupils are raising money by making and selling cakes for Japanese people affected by the Tsunami. Pupils' contribution to their learning is considerable. They adapt extremely well to opportunities to self-assess, using different coloured cups in Year 3 to signify their understanding.

Pupils enter the school with average attainment levels. Pupils, including those believed to be entitled to free school meals, and the few pupils who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. In 2010 the girls did not do as well as the boys in mathematics. School monitoring reveals that this was a particular cohort matter. Nevertheless, the school continues to monitor the progress of girls, who willingly give their views on how to improve mathematics.

◆ Pupils gain good entrepreneurial skills through activities such as the business enterprise week, teamwork, and budgeting for and selling items at the local fair. They participate willingly in the Civic Award scheme, meeting with and helping in the local community. These aspects, together with above average attainment in ICT and excellent attendance levels, contribute to the pupils being prepared well for the next stage of their education. One parent reflected this when writing, 'Children leave well-rounded with a great attitude to learning that sets them up for life.'

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

In a Year 5 English lesson the teacher used questioning well to challenge pupils' knowledge of imaginative sentence starters. Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure. In an outstanding English lesson the teacher built challenge very well and ensured pupils clearly understood the specific vocabulary used. There is good pace to some lessons. Time is used well; a Year 5 English lesson saw pupils' concentration levels being well maintained by a good mix of activities. Pupils' progress dips because of inconsistencies in teaching regarding aspects of planning. It is too early to see the full impact of the improving quality of teaching. However, the whole-school focus on the use of assessment to aid learning has had a quick and very successful impact. Pupils are very aware of self-assessment opportunities and 'cut away' to another group or activity which further challenges them. A Year 3 mathematics lesson about identifying different types of angles saw the teacher consistently reminding pupils that they have to 'prove' their learning. Pupils know their levels of work, and marking, particularly in English and mathematics, sets clear targets for improvement.

The curriculum increasingly meets the needs of pupils. In mathematics there is a move to quiet, paired work, for which girls express a preference. However, there is still some way to go to meet the needs of boys in writing and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are missed opportunities for other subjects to support literacy and numeracy, and cross-subject links are underdeveloped. Good use is made of the local

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history society and the medieval Southampton project has raised pupils' awareness of their local community well. Visits, such as the residential trip to an activity centre, and external visitors enhance the curriculum well. The resident artist and African dancers add greatly to pupils' learning. Pupils enjoy the various other activities they receive, which include sports, homework and 'good news' clubs.

Case studies and the nurture group demonstrate the school's pro-active approach to what is a good level of care, guidance and support for pupils. A wide range of external agencies help to support pupils and their families with regard to social, mental, health as well as educational problems. Parents and carers say that the detailed transition arrangements are good both in and out of the school. Those pupils who find learning difficult have specific arrangements in place to help them get on track. The monitoring of pupils at whole-school level is improving and enables the school to quickly identify those pupils requiring additional support. While improved teaching, including the small intervention groups, is resulting in broadly satisfactory progress for these pupils, the analysis of the impact of intervention is not sufficiently rigorous.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear focus on improving pupils' progress. This underpins school development planning and is effectively shared with adults. Assessment information is used well during the effective progress meetings, despite gaps in the skills of subject leaders in analysing the progress of pupil groups. Teachers in 'Teaching and Learning Community groups' share good practice, and this has resulted in the impressive development of assessment strategies. Members of the governing body carefully oversee the equal opportunities policy and have monitored the reduction of racial incidents in the school. Consequently, the school provides well for equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. They are becoming increasingly effective at holding the school to account with regard to pupils' academic performance. The school has sound procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet government guidelines and include effective checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to managing the safety of pupils. While members of the governing body talk informally to pupils there are missed opportunities to gain their views regarding safeguarding and the promotion of equal opportunities. Community cohesion is good. The school understands its context very well, with established links to the church, contrasting schools in the United Kingdom and Uganda and a local temple. Pupils' global awareness is well developed by the visits from the African school. While some curriculum work has started with the United Kingdom school, the school recognises that there is room for

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more. The Parent Forum and other strategies are used effectively to contact 'hard-to-reach' parents and carers. Good partnerships exist with parents and carers. The revamped website provides valuable information, while various workshops and leaflets help parents and carers to support their child's learning well. The school is aware of the need to further develop the information flow through, for example, a virtual learning environment. Good partnerships with external bodies provide pupils with opportunities they otherwise would not have. The local cluster of schools provides mentoring training and opportunities for higher attaining pupils in the Science Youth University project. The effective and developing soft federation has already resulted in growing consistency in areas such as assessment, policies and adult training. ♦

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

About 40% of parents and carers returned questionnaires; this is slightly more than expected for a school of this size. All parents and carers who returned the questionnaire believe that the school helps them support their child's learning. A very few parents and carers expressed concerns about the rate of their child's progress. Inspectors have judged progress to be satisfactory and improving. A very few of the responding parents and carers do not believe that teaching is good. In the lessons observed by inspectors there were several lessons judged good or better. Overall, teaching is judged satisfactory because it is too early to see the full impact of the improving picture of the quality of teaching. A very small minority expressed a concern about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors judged behaviour during the inspection as good. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bitterne Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 239 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	67	28	31	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	79	18	20	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	50	55	40	44	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	56	37	41	3	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	56	62	30	33	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	55	41	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	51	42	46	2	2	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)	59	65	31	34	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	57	34	37	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	48	42	46	4	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	47	42	46	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	66	73	23	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	75	20	22	3	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	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.



31 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bitterne Church of England Voluntary Controlled Junior School, Bitterne SO19 7BX

You may remember our recent visit to your school, and thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. You were eager to tell us about your school and we listened carefully. We believe yours is a satisfactory school. This means that it does some things very well and that there are other things it could do better. We believe that you make an excellent contribution to your school and local area. We especially liked the work of the school councillors, the 'Young Apprentices' and those of you participating in the Civic Award. Well done!

You told us how safe you feel and that the adults look after you well. We believe you have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. We were very impressed by the way you understand about 'cutting away' during lessons, and the need to prove your learning. You told us how helpful you find the pre-assessments that lead to targets for improving your work.

Your progress is getting better mainly because there are more good lessons. Boys' writing is improving as a result of the many chances you have to write. We have asked the teachers to make sure you are all challenged to do your best. You could further help your teachers by telling them when you find the work too easy or too hard. We saw for ourselves the wide range of activities you have in school. The school is going to look at how it can link subjects together so that you can practise, for example, your writing and mathematics even more often. We have asked your teachers to make it clearer in lessons what skills you need to learn to reach a challenging lesson objective.

Things are improving in your school. You told us about how behaviour is better. The adults want the school to be even better. The adults who lead subjects are making changes. We have asked that they look more deeply at how these changes affect your progress throughout the school. Also, we have asked that these adults show more clearly where subjects like history help the school to meet, for example, its aim of improving the standard of your work in writing.

Once again thank you for your help, and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely Michael Pye

Lead inspector

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