

# Bernards Heath Infants' School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117135
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379355
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 October 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Preston

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>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	317
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rachel Houlden
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Thomas-Burton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 June 2009
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 16 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning. They also analysed 196 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- Has the school sustained recent improvements in pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in mathematics?
- Are all groups of pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieving as well as they can?
- Is the improved teaching and assessment practice fully embedded across the whole school?
- What has been the impact of the recent changes in leadership and management including governance?

## Information about the school

Bernards Heath is considerably larger than the average size infant school and has virtually doubled in size over recent years. While the majority of pupils are White British, there is an above average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also above average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. There is a breakfast club on site though it is not managed by the governing body and so is not included in the inspection. The school has gained the Eco School silver award and Healthy Schools status.

**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

Bernards Heath is a good and improving school. The headteacher, well supported by an effective governing body, has successfully established a much larger and increasingly effective team of teachers and support staff in a school that has grown considerably in size. Together, they have succeeded in sustaining the school's reputation as a welcoming and supportive school while working to further improve standards and pupils' progress. Parents and carers recognise these strengths in a popular and well-regarded school.

Pupils make good progress and attain standards above the national average, including in mathematics where pupils' attainment has previously been lower than that in reading and writing. Effective learning support ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of English language acquisition make similar progress to others in the school. Pupils feel exceptionally safe because of the lack of any bullying and the readiness of staff to help them if they have concerns. Behaviour is almost always good and sometimes exemplary. Attendance is high. Given their young ages, pupils are articulate and show considerable maturity as reflected in their readiness to contribute and be involved. Their very strong commitment to healthy lifestyles is reflected in their sensible eating, high participation in sports and physical activities and readiness to act as 'ambassadors' in promoting healthy lifestyles in assemblies and by acting as fruit and milk monitors. Pupils are very aware of much of their own local community, but their knowledge of national and international diversity is less well developed. The school does not always take full advantage of the range of backgrounds of its pupils to broaden their horizons.

Teachers and support staff succeed in making lessons interesting. They create positive, non-threatening learning environments that encourage pupils to readily respond and be involved. Lessons have a clear learning purpose and the best teaching carefully matches the pace and level of learning to pupils' different needs. However, there is some inconsistency in practice across the school: work is not consistently challenging for all pupils and time is not always well managed to enable them to successfully complete and present work well. All teachers enable pupils to evaluate the progress they have made in lessons. The better marking and assessment practice helps pupils reflect on their progress and provides them with 'next step' targets towards improving their National Curriculum levels. However, while marking is always positive and constructive, this good practice has yet to be adopted by all staff.

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Staff have worked collaboratively to devise an exciting and relevant curriculum. It provides a good range of experiences that actively involve pupils in their learning and develop their literacy and numeracy and use of information and communication technology. Parents and carers comment very positively on the exceptional range of school visits and extra-curricular activities for an infant school.

Care, guidance and support are strong. Despite becoming much larger, the school remains welcoming and inclusive. Its induction arrangements enable pupils to quickly settle and its similarly well planned arrangements help pupils in their move to junior school. Well targeted interventions are tailored to the needs of individuals enabling them to overcome any learning difficulties and become more independent learners.

The headteacher has successfully established a larger senior leadership team and is involving the wider staff in monitoring, evaluating and improving provision. This is evident in good curriculum development, rigorous tracking of pupils' progress, a range of effective learning support and outstanding success in engaging parents and carers in both their children's learning and in the work of the school. The governing body has developed a much more active role. It is involved in monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school and has a very clear appreciation of the schools' strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation is effective, and staff are ambitious to move the school forward. The capacity to improve further is good.

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

- Make teaching and learning more consistently good or better by:
  - ensuring all lessons have clear and achievable learning outcomes that are finely matched to the different needs and abilities of pupils
  - providing opportunities for pupils to improve the accuracy and presentation of their work.
  
- Ensure all marking reflects the best practice in the school by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress and appreciate the next steps they need to take in their learning
  - showing pupils how improving their work relates to their targets in the school's tracking of pupil progress.
  
- Improve pupils' contact with and awareness of the modern British and global community by:
  - celebrating the growing religious, cultural and ethnic diversity of the school
  - establishing more national and international links.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

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Children start nursery with skills in most areas that are broadly as expected for their age. There are strengths in physical and personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress and enter Year 1 with standards in literacy and numeracy a little above average. All groups of pupils subsequently make good progress with twice as many pupils attaining the higher National Curriculum level 3 compared with the national average. A year ago, the school responded promptly to concerns about the progress, of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities with well-planned support much appreciated by parents and carers. This now ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make as rapid progress as others.

Pupils are keen to learn, though occasionally they rush work and as a result it is not well presented. Particularly good progress was evident in an outstanding Year 2 numeracy lesson, where middle and higher ability pupils successfully used their problem solving and number skills to estimate the number of cup-cakes required to build different sized wedding cakes. Their progress was enhanced by the good support they received. A Year 1 class made good progress in constructing a simple sentence; most appreciated the importance of punctuation with the higher ability pupils able to use connective words given to them by the teacher as an extension activity.

Pupils show a genuine sense of enjoyment and fascination about the world around them, for example asking where water in puddles disappears to in sunshine. They become more self-aware and begin to develop a real appreciation of right and wrong through assemblies and classwork. Most use good social and inter-personal skills during group work. Children’s cultural development is less strong. They know of other nationalities and some religious and cultural differences but are less aware of differing attitudes and beliefs.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</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</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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<b>contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons are well planned and managed, with a clear purpose shared with the pupils and revisited at the end of the lesson to help pupils evaluate their progress. Lesson content is varied and interesting though, on occasion, not enough time is given to enable pupils to finish tasks. Learning is organised well and good use is made of teaching assistants to support less able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Provision of more challenging learning, particularly for the most able, is more variable. The recently developed topic-based curriculum provides varied and interesting work schemes including opportunities to improve numeracy as well as literacy. The well planned phonics programme contributes effectively to this area of provision. All pupils are encouraged to belong to the wide range of clubs, and many participate in competitions and events to represent their school. The curriculum is considerably enhanced by the large number of parent and carer volunteers who organise and support different activities in the school including cooking, gardening, reading, mathematics and library. The positive outcomes in terms of pupil attitudes, attendance and behaviour all reflect the effective care and guidance provided by the school. Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and others who are a cause for concern is particularly strong. The school's well-developed monitoring procedures ensure rapid intervention to address any concerns.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and governing body are well informed about safeguarding and place a high priority on child protection. All safeguarding procedures are robust and the school is working especially hard to ensure each child's safety during current building work on the school site and around the main access points. The very high and positive parental questionnaire responses indicate very effective engagement with parents and carers based on much positive face-to-face contact with teachers and the headteacher. There are regular bulletins, consultation evenings, assemblies,

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open days, a forum and an established text service much appreciated by parents and carers. There is an active parent association and over ninety parent and carer volunteers who maintain a very high level of involvement in the daily life of the school through a range of in-school activities and outside visits. The curriculum helps pupils' cultural development but wider national and international links are modest and, given the inclusive nature of the school, there have been missed opportunities to celebrate the considerable range of ethnic and cultural diversity within it. Even so, the school commitment to equal opportunity and tackling discrimination is evident in the careful tracking and support of all groups and individuals. There are no significant differences between the achievement of girls and boys, nor between pupils of different social or ethnic backgrounds. The school has responded decisively to narrow any gaps in performance. Governance is good. The headteacher, governing body and staff are ambitious for all the pupils in their care and this is reflected in their commitment to rigorous self-evaluation, further training and development and participation in the 'good to outstanding' school initiative.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</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>2</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>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children of all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress through Nursery and Reception. Many children for whom English is an additional language often make particularly good progress. Children are happy and secure because of warm, welcoming relationships in the setting and most make strong progress in all aspects of their personal and social development. Children behave well, act considerately to others and show increasing independence in making decisions for themselves. Learning behaviour is good and most are able to concentrate on tasks, particularly when they are interested and engaged by the activity. They know about staying safe and healthy.



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The inside and outside learning areas are well equipped and teachers and support staff have a good understanding of Early Years Foundation Stage practice, evident in a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activity. All areas of learning are well covered and the strong focus on developing writing in last year’s Reception class is paying dividends for pupils’ progress in the current Year 1. The exemplary learning journals for each child record purposeful activities that promote learning and assess progress made. These assessments are used well to help plan further learning activities. Relationships between adults and children are warm and supportive and pupils make good progress. The pace of learning slows when activities are not well planned or lack clear purpose.

The Early Years Foundation Stage team work well together and are constantly looking to improve. All staff attend regular training. They use outside agencies well to support the needs of particular children.

*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**

A considerably higher than average proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaire. All but a small number were positive about all aspects of the school, although some made constructive comments about what could be improved further. Parents and carers praise the excellent induction arrangements and welcoming and supportive nature of the school. They value the specific support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities although some felt their children could be challenged more in class. A few parents and carers feel there could have been more consultation about changes in the school uniform but many more greatly appreciate the efforts the school makes to involve them in their children’s education and maintain very effective communication. The inspection recognised the numerous strengths identified by parents and carers, while also concluding that the otherwise effective teaching and assessment could be further improved to provide consistently challenging learning opportunities for all pupils.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bernards Heath Infants' 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 196 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 317 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	136	69	56	29	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	154	79	40	20	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	122	62	70	36	2	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	114	58	76	39	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	133	68	59	30	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	119	61	73	37	2	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	116	59	74	38	2	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	96	49	79	40	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	112	57	72	37	6	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	92	47	79	40	7	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	81	41	90	46	7	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	125	64	69	35	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	141	74	52	25	1	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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"> <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.**



19 October 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Bernards Heath Infants' School, St Albans, AL1 4AP**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. It gives you a good education and ensures that you achieve well. We were impressed with how quickly you have settled into school and made friends. It was good to hear that so many of you feel very safe in school and are happy with the help and support you are given. We were pleased too that you behave well in lessons and around the school. We could see that you are very committed to healthy lifestyles. We liked your sensible eating, the way you join in lots of sports and physical activities and the way you try to get others to be healthy too.

Very many of your parents and carers told us how much you like school, and this is reflected in your high attendance. You get on well with your teachers and like being actively involved in the many class activities and visits outside. Most of you said you understand your learning targets in lessons. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 did not fully appreciate how their marked classwork could help them. We have asked the teachers to make it clear how you can improve your National Curriculum level in literacy and numeracy when they mark. Your teachers plan different activities and visits that make your learning very interesting. However, some of your parents and carers told us that sometimes you would like the challenge of more difficult work. We agree and have asked the teachers to vary class activities to more closely match work to your particular abilities. We have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to learn about how different people live, in this country and abroad.

The governing body, headteacher and all the staff are working hard to improve the school further. You can all help by maintaining your high attendance, and by trying to be neat and accurate in the written work you do.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston  
Lead inspector

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