

Little Bowden School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119936
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	379911
Inspection dates	13–14 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

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	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Pollard
Headteacher	Hayley Brown (Acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed, in part or in full, 13 lessons and all 13 of the school's class teachers who taught over the time of the inspection. They held meetings with two representatives of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They also spoke with the local authority adviser to the school. Inspectors looked at policies and reviewed documents and the data the school has on pupils' progress. They scrutinised 107 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.

- Inspectors considered how well assessment information is used in judging attainment, in recognising progress and in helping teachers to plan lessons that are right for each pupil.
- They explored teachers' effectiveness in promoting the progress of all pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are more able.
- They looked at how well leaders have embedded procedures and systems to develop all aspects of the school.

Information about the school

Little Bowden is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is about average; as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, although this has risen over the last few years. Only a very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school is in the mid-stage of an extensive building programme. The large new extension is planned to open in March 2012.

The school is led by an acting headteacher. The previous headteacher left the school in September 2011. Standardised assessment test data for Year 6 pupils who left the school in July 2011 have not been published.

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

Little Bowden is a good school. It provides a caring, supportive environment where pupils thrive and are prepared well to meet the challenge of their next school. The comment of one parent and carer reflects the position of many: 'My son is extremely happy at Little Bowden and he is doing very well.'

Pupils make increasingly good progress as they move through the school. They begin the Reception year with skills and understanding broadly in line with national expectations in most of the areas of learning. Over the year, they make good progress and enter Year 1 slightly above average attainment. The good progress continues over Key stage 1 and by the end of Year 2, pupils attain above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. As they move through Key Stage 2, they make greater gains against the averages in English and mathematics. Pupils leave Year 6 with standards in these subjects that are well above those expected nationally. They make good progress and their attainment is above average in other subjects, most notably in art and design and in history.

The school is an exceptionally safe place, and parents and carers are very appreciative of this. Pupils are valued and respected as individuals. They say that they like school very much, 'because it is easy to make friends', and the teachers 'always help when we need it.' They behave well in lessons and throughout the school. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes to their work make important contributions to the good progress they make. These features also ensure that they develop into polite and considerate young people. The school's caring and supportive ethos, and the good relationships pupils have with all the staff, contribute to their good awareness of spiritual and moral issues. They learn to recognise the importance of trust, respect and friendship, and the difference between right and wrong. They know how to make the right choices, especially when these have to do with staying safe and keeping healthy. Attendance is above average. Although pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community, they have fewer opportunities to find out about contrasting ways of life in other parts of the United Kingdom and overseas.

The staff are unified in their commitment to the school. They are fully behind the acting headteacher. This has made an important contribution to ensuring that the impact of the recent turbulence, in part caused by the extensive building programme, has not affected the standards pupils attain or in the range and quality of their learning experiences. The school has improved since the previous inspection.

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Pupils are making better progress because teaching is better. There are though, pockets of inconsistency across the school caused primarily by teachers not being helped enough by the school's system for recognising how well pupils are doing in their learning. They do not have sufficiently detailed information on how well pupils are progressing against their targets and what they know and can do in different subjects. This means that some lessons are made up of tasks that do not provide a close enough match with the learning needs of each pupil. Some tasks are either too hard or too easy, and both act to limit learning. Governance is good. Through their good self-evaluation procedures, the governing body and senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The capacity for sustaining improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and progress even further by sharpening assessment procedures so that:
 - it is clear how well pupils are doing against their learning targets and progress can be judged accurately
 - teachers have detailed information about pupils' prior attainment and use this in planning lessons that provide exactly the right amount of challenge for each pupil.
- Ensure that pupils gain a greater understanding of contrasting ways of life in other parts of the United Kingdom and globally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In most lessons, planning matches well with pupils' learning needs. In these lessons, all pupils make equally good progress. This includes boys and girls, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who are gifted and talented and those of minority ethnic heritage. This was clear in a good lesson in design and technology. Pupils were challenged to design and make a Christmas card that lit up. The lesson began with the teacher recalling prior work on electricity from lessons in science. He quickly created a circuit familiar to pupils, using a battery, light bulb and wire. Pupils soon realised that this circuit would not work in a Christmas card: both the battery and light bulb were too big. They reasoned that they would need a flat circuit. A light emitting diode, some kitchen foil in place of conducting wire and a thin battery were quickly made available to each table. Pupils worked efficiently and excitedly in their groups. The circuit of the first group to complete was shown to the class and ways to improve the circuit were identified. After showing the circuits of three groups, the better design features were recognised and those which did not match the task well enough were discarded. During this process, the teacher gave no direct help or advice. Pupils were responsible for their own learning. They benefitted from this as they gained a good understanding of the link between the designing and making processes. When they had completed their circuits they were quick to explain why the circuit had to be designed as it was, and one pupil said he, 'couldn't wait for

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the next lesson when he would help design and make a Christmas card and fit the circuit to it.' In the lessons that do not provide a close enough match to the learning needs of all pupils, some pupils make good progress and others very little.

Pupils have fully accepted their responsibilities as learners. They gain real benefit from, and are proud of, the contribution they make to the running of the school. They are members of the school council, playground leaders and sports ambassadors. Year 6 pupils write the school newsletter. The good take-up of lunchtime activities and after-school sports clubs shows pupils' good awareness of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Links with the local church are well established and pupils take a full part in the major church festivals. These, and the regular visits of the local vicar, have a positive impact on the way they develop into polite youngsters who show respect for adults and their friends. Within the locality, they have many opportunities to consider their lives in comparison to those of other people, including visiting local residential homes, especially to sing carols at Christmas time.

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	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The range of learning needs in most classes is wide, and teachers and their assistants usually meet this challenge well. This is evident from the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/disabilities, and from the above average number of pupils who gain higher National Curriculum levels in English and, especially, in mathematics. Through the introduction of termly progress meetings,

¹ 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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pupils who have difficulty in keeping up are quickly identified for extra provision. In this way, assessment procedures are working well, but senior leaders do not ensure that teachers have precise enough information about individuals and groups to enable them always to plan lessons that effectively challenge each pupil.

The curriculum is well planned, broad and well balanced. It is changing to better reflect the interests and needs of boys through the selection of topics, such as dinosaurs and the Second World War. The extra-curricular programme is a particular strength. The many lunchtime and after-school clubs, from cookery and maypole dancing to the different sports clubs have a high uptake. Collectively, they provide valuable additional learning experiences for a good proportion of pupils. Those in Years 4 and 6 also benefit from the annual residential visits to activity-based centres.

Pupils are cared for and supported well. The arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are good and provision is managed well. The extra opportunities available to support learning in literacy and numeracy are effective in speeding up learning. Those with additional difficulties, be they related to health, emotions or behaviour, are dealt with equally well through the school's work with specialists and other agencies. Transition into the Reception year from the many pre-school settings is very smooth. Transition when pupils move on to secondary school is equally good. Procedures for ensuring pupils attend regularly have led to an improvement in overall attendance in each of the last three years.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have led and managed improvement well. The introduction of improved systems, most notably a tracking system and the linked termly progress meetings, has had a significant impact in raising standards and increasing pupils' progress. These developments have also helped to focus the work of teachers and their assistants so that they are now more accountable for the progress of their pupils. Subject co-ordinators have responded well to the greater responsibility they have been given for leading and managing their subjects. The good progress in art and design, and the high quality work in many subjects displayed throughout the school, reflect their good efforts in driving improvement in their subjects. The governing body supports the school well. Its members have dealt well with issues to do with the planning and construction arrangements for the new extension. Since the previous inspection, their understanding of the school's

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strengths and weaknesses has improved. This is helping them to take an increasing role in supporting the drive for improvement.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough and the school exceeds statutory requirements, including those for training. The governing body has been diligent in securing the safety and well-being of pupils and staff despite the disruptions caused by the building programme. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The good links established with other relevant agencies help all pupils gain equal access to all that the school offers. There is no discrimination of any sort. The school has good procedures for ensuring parents and carers are able to gain all the information they wish on the progress of their children and the activities of the school. The website is used well to present newsletters and class pages. Through the development of the 'virtual learning environment', parents and carers of pupils in Years 3 and 4 are able to gain detailed information on the topics their children are currently following. Similarly, parents and carers of pupils in Years 3 to 6 can gain access to their children's homework in English and mathematics.

The links with the local community are strong. Pupils gain a good awareness of the history and tradition of their locality through visits to the local theatre and museum, by taking part in the river walk and in local competitions, such as the tag rugby competition organised by the local police. The links with the other primary schools and the local secondary school that make up the family of schools add benefit through joint initiatives, for example to do with training in specific areas and with the moderation of pupils' work. There are too few opportunities, however, for pupils to learn about national and international communities with which they can compare and contrast their own traditions and beliefs. The school is at an early stage in forging national and global links.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start in the Reception year. Although they enter the school with a wide range of skills and understanding, overall these are broadly in line with national expectations in each of the areas of learning. They settle quickly as they develop strong and trusting relationships with the staff and soon recognise their expectations for learning and behaviour. Routinely, they work hard and take a full part in all the activities. This includes when they are learning by themselves and when they learn with others, for example in taking turns and listening. They make good progress and leave the Reception year with attainment that is marginally above national averages. Through their good behaviour, they show good regard for staying safe. They gain good awareness of the choices they need to make to stay healthy including the need to follow good hygiene practices, eat healthily and to be active.

The Reception classes are happy places. Leadership and day-to-day management are good. The good assessment procedures provide detailed information on how children are doing. Good leadership ensures that teachers pay due regard to this information in planning sessions that match well with childrens' interests and capabilities. The outdoor area has been improved and is now used more regularly; spending more time outside adds interest and breadth to children's learning experiences.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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

The great majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are very supportive of the school and agree that they are happy with its work. One parent summed up the comments of many when writing: 'My child has made great progress since joining the school. All staff are very supportive and they have clearly made his time at school very enjoyable.' The issue which most troubles parents and carers has to do with leadership and management. A small minority feel that they do not gain sufficient information from the school on how well their children are doing. Others feel the school does not take enough account of their suggestions. Inspectors found that the procedures for communicating with parents and carers are good, allowing them to receive information from the school in a number of ways. There are sufficient procedures to allow parents and carers access to senior leaders and the governing body to make comment and offer their suggestions for improvement. Since the previous inspection in January 2009, important aspects of the school have

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improved. Most notably, the standards pupils attain and the progress they make are both better.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Little Bowden 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 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 344 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	57	42	40	4	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	53	47	44	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	40	49	46	13	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	48	45	42	40	15	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	53	50	40	38	6	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	42	49	46	9	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	41	61	58	1	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)	40	38	51	48	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	42	45	42	14	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	36	42	40	13	12	6	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	30	50	47	15	14	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	23	39	37	20	19	6	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	44	49	46	8	8	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).

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"> ■ 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.



15 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Little Bowden School, Market Harborough, LE16 8AY

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We found it to be a good school that does some things very well. These are some of the things we especially liked.

- You make good progress in your learning.
- You behave well and the school helps you to grow up to be polite and thoughtful.
- You are learning about what is right for you and this is helping you to be well prepared to do well at your next school.
- You say that you feel really safe and secure at school and enjoy being there.
- Your attendance is good.
- The school has improved since the last inspection.

To help your school to continue to improve, I have asked the people who lead it to use a better system for recording your learning and checking how well you are doing against your targets. I have asked your teachers to use this information to plan lessons that are just right for each of you; not too hard and not too easy. If they do this well, you will make better progress in your learning. I have also asked the school to give you more opportunities to find out about the lives of those who live outside of your local area and in other countries of the world.

Of course, you can all help by continuing to behave as well as you did over the time of my visit, always working hard in lessons and by taking a full part in school life.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins
Lead inspector

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