

Bedford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104892
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	395470
Inspection dates	26–27 June 2012
Lead inspector	Joanne Olsson HMI

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	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Hampson
Headteacher	Ruth Braithwaite
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joanne Olsson
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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons led by 16 teachers. Two of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited classrooms to observe intervention strategies and the teaching of reading. Inspectors observed pupils at play and during lunchtime and heard pupils read. Meetings were held with staff, different groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and senior leaders and managers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including arrangements for safeguarding, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' books. They considered the responses to questionnaires from staff, pupils and 58 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is lower than found nationally and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. There are over twice as many pupils known to be eligible for free school meals than found nationally. The proportion of pupils supported at School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than found in other schools. The proportion of pupils who move into and out of the school throughout the academic year is double the national average. The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has received the Basic Skills Award, the International School Award and the silver Eco-Award.

Since the previous inspection, the acting headteacher was appointed as the substantive headteacher and a new assistant headteacher joined the school. Six members of staff have taken maternity leave in the past two years.

The school shares its site with Cambridge Children's Centre. This provision is not managed by the governing body 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key Findings

- This is a good school with significant strengths in pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, in leadership and management and the curriculum. Overall effectiveness is not outstanding because teaching is good rather than exceptional on a day-to day basis and some more-able pupils do not always make rapid gains in their learning. Nonetheless, pupils thrive in this cohesive and inclusive successful school. 'Team Bedford' sums up this school well because individuals are valued and aspirations are high. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers would recommend this school to others.
- Pupils make good progress from their very low starting points to reach attainment levels which broadly match the national average by the end of Year 6. Some pupils make rapid progress. Pupils' attainment in mathematics has improved year-on-year. Their attainment in reading and writing is relatively weaker. This is because fewer pupils gain the higher levels for their age.
- Teaching is good and improving quickly because strategies are consistently applied. Sometimes teachers do not always allow pupils enough time to practise new learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary on a day-to-day basis and over time. Pupils manage their own behaviour very well and learning is rarely disrupted. They feel safe from bullying because they know how their words or actions can harm others. They have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Although teaching and pupils' achievement are good overall, leadership and management are outstanding. This is because attainment levels have been maintained, pupils' achievement in mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved and behaviour, safety and attendance are stronger than at the previous inspection. The leadership of teaching and the management of performance are outstanding; they have led to marked improvements in key areas of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement, particularly for the most-able pupils so that they make greater gains in their learning by:
 - ensuring that all activities planned for the more-able pupils precisely match their needs
 - systematically tackling pupils' weaknesses in spelling.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it consistently matches the best in the school by:
 - providing greater opportunities for older pupils to read for meaning during independent reading activities
 - allowing pupils sufficient time to practise and consolidate their learning before they are moved on to new challenges
 - developing teachers' marking so that it is more precise in identifying the steps pupils need to take to improve their written work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Beautifully presented work books show pupils' obvious pride and enjoyment in learning. Pupils know their goals and want to do well. They are enthusiastic about their learning and relish a challenge. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils bubbled with excitement as they worked out whether characters from a book had 'stolen' money. In doing this they effortlessly acquired the ability to halve numbers and apply their findings to solve problems. Pupils' resilience and confidence is developed from the earliest stage. In Reception, children showed sustained concentration as they independently chose to write letters home. Their ability to work together was evident as a small group set about digging and building in the construction area.

Parents and carers unanimously agree that their children make good progress. Inspectors found pupils make at least good progress over time so attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6. Although most pupils gain the average level for their age in English, fewer gain the higher levels. This means pupils' attainment in reading and writing is slightly lower than average by the time they leave the school. Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are much lower than expected for their age. Their skills in reading and writing are exceptionally low. Children typically make good progress to reach lower than expected levels at the start of Year 1. However, sustained improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that more children are reaching the goals expected for their age. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is lower than the national average by the end of Year 2. Nevertheless, it is improving securely.

All pupils achieve well. Disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs and less-able pupils make significant gains in their learning, given their starting points and capabilities. Some more-able pupils do not always make similar rapid progress because tasks are sometimes too easy or too difficult. The considerable number of pupils who enter the school at different points in the academic year settle quickly and make equally strong progress.

Although relatively weaker than mathematics, pupils' achievement in writing is improving quickly. Their handwriting and punctuation skills are secure and they can write at length for different purposes using appropriate vocabulary. Nonetheless, some pupils have weaknesses in their spelling skills.

Quality of teaching

All of the pupils, parents and carers who returned the questionnaire agree that teaching is good. Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books confirm that teaching is consistently good on a day-to-day basis and is improving securely over time. The school's caring ethos underpins highly positive relationships that exist in calm and purposeful classrooms. Teachers plan exciting activities which bring learning alive. For example, pupils in Year 6 know and use complex punctuation because the teacher has effectively linked it to physical actions. Resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), are used very well to immerse pupils in topics and extend their experience and skills. Exceptional teaching is characterised by precise questioning and expert modelling which challenges all ability groups. Sometimes, teachers try to do too much in lessons. This means pupils do not always have enough time to practise and to consolidate their new learning before they are moved on to the next challenge.

Teaching is very effective at meeting the needs of disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs and less-able pupils. This is because tasks are well-matched to their individual targets and skilled teaching assistants provide effective support. These pupils benefit from outstanding teaching during small-group activities.

The imaginative curriculum means teachers seize opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills across all subjects. Teachers systematically ensure that pupils acquire the necessary tools to become confident writers. The strategies to promote early reading are exemplary. Teachers ensure that older pupils enhance their reading skills through adult-led reading sessions. However, independent reading activities do not always provide enough opportunity for older pupils to read for meaning. Teachers' marking is thorough, but the guidance they provide to help pupils improve sometimes lacks precision.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and leads to pupils' love of learning. All opportunities to reinforce personal values and explore other cultures are exploited. This was clearly evident in a Year 6 lesson as pupils considered how the Olympics promoted pride, respect and tolerance across the world.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils, parents and carers think behaviour in school is good. A very small minority believe learning is disrupted by bad behaviour. Inspection evidence shows pupils' behaviour is a significant strength of the school. It is exemplary on a day-to-day basis because pupils are very adept at managing their own behaviour and they value the education they receive. This means that they participate fully in their learning and few pupils are passive in lessons. Although a very small number of pupils find managing their behaviour more difficult, the support they receive and the attitudes of their classmates mean that learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils see themselves as part of a team and know what is expected from them as an individual and as a group. Adults rarely need to check pupils' behaviour in any area of

the school. This was clearly evident during two whole-school assemblies. Pupils' respect for adults and each other meant no-one had to be reminded to be sensible or pay attention.

Almost all pupils, parents and carers think that pupils are safe in school. Most believe the school deals with all forms of bullying very well. Different groups of pupils say that bullying hardly ever happens at school. They recognise that there is occasional name-calling but they are confident issues are quickly resolved. Pupils know why it is wrong to make fun of someone who finds learning difficult or has a physical disability. They are equally confident that pupils who find learning easy are not isolated. They understand why homophobic and racist name-calling is unacceptable because they respect and value differences. As one pupil commented, 'It does not matter what you look like on the outside; it's what is on the inside that counts.' Pupils have an acute understanding of the risks they may face as they grow up. They talk with confidence about peer pressure and what strategies they will use to avoid being involved in gangs. They know they should steer clear of smoking and alcohol misuse. They are keenly aware of the steps they need to take to protect themselves when using the internet at home. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. It is above average.

Leadership and management

High aspirations and a shared drive to achieve excellence permeate the whole school community. As one pupil commented, 'they want us to be confident; to reach our goals and to have a good life.' Despite staff turbulence, teaching is never less than good and is improving securely. This is due to good induction procedures, well-targeted professional development and very effective systems to manage the performance of teachers. Roles and responsibilities are clearly distributed. In leading and being part of highly effective curriculum teams, all staff take an active part in driving improvement. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is exceptional because monitoring systems are rigorous and lead to sustained improvements. For example, focused professional development for early reading, coupled with robust monitoring mean that this aspect of the school is exemplary. As a result, the school's capacity to sustain further improvement is very strong.

Leaders and managers know the school very well. Consequently, actions to tackle relative weaknesses identified during the inspection are already in place. For example, systems have recently been implemented to provide greater support for more-able pupils. Members of the governing body play an active role in checking the performance of the school. Through visits to classrooms and detailed analysis of achievement data they have an acute understanding of the school's priorities. Pupils' achievement is carefully tracked and swift action is taken to tackle underperformance. As achievement gaps between groups are narrowing over time and there are few incidents of harassment, the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is strong. Partnerships are used very well to support pupils' learning and well-being. Links with the Children's Centre have been strengthened so that children settle into school quickly and are making greater gains in their learning. The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.

The innovative and creative curriculum provides pupils with memorable experiences and rich opportunities for learning. Subjects are interwoven seamlessly so that pupils' knowledge and skills are deepened over time. Themed days and opportunities for pupils to learn outside the classroom are used to immerse pupils in new topics and to make learning relevant. During the inspection, all pupils showed enormous enthusiasm for the Olympics topic because it sparked their imagination and related to real life. The curriculum has a very positive impact

on behaviour and pupils' understanding of safety. It makes a significant contribution to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In conjunction with well-planned assemblies and a range of visitors to the school, pupils consider the choices they need to make and reflect on the impact of their actions on others. They explore different faiths and cultures through links with other schools and visits to places of worship. Consequently, they are well placed to live in a diverse society.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



28 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bedford Primary School, Bootle, L20 9LJ

We thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent with you when we recently came to inspect your school. It was a real pleasure to meet so many confident and well-behaved pupils. Thank you for sharing your work and your views with us. It was clear that you are very proud of your school. We think Bedford is a good school with many strengths. These are the main things we found out during the inspection.

- You make good progress over time so that your attainment is average by the time you leave school. You rightly think you learn a lot in lessons.
- You feel safe and happy at school. Your attendance has improved and is above average. Well done!
- You enjoy your learning because teachers are very good at making learning fun. You get lots of opportunities to use your reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Your behaviour during the inspection and over time is outstanding. You are respectful to adults and each other. You are very good at making the right choices so that adults hardly ever have to ask you to be sensible. Older pupils take their responsibilities as role models very seriously.
- You think bullying is very rare. You know about different types of bullying and how to keep yourself safe.

To get even better we have asked the people in charge of your school to do a couple of things. We have asked them to help some of you who are more-able to make better progress by making sure your learning is always challenging. We have also asked them to help all of you to improve your spelling skills and to give you more chances to read for meaning. It really was a pleasure to meet you. Your excellent attitudes and courteous behaviour make Bedford a very special place to be.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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