

Bearbrook Combined School

Fowler Road, Aylesbury, HP19 7QP

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has been highly effective in leading the changes that have resulted in rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. He is ably supported by senior leaders and the governing body.
- From low starting points, pupils make good progress to reach average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. The school is very effective at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is reflected in their good behaviour and improving attendance.
- Teaching is good, with some outstanding practice.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, make good and at times outstanding progress. This is because of the good-quality support they receive.
- Support for families and for pupils who are potentially vulnerable is effective and well managed.
- Pupils have many memorable experiences including a wide variety of exciting visits, residential stays and visitors to school throughout the year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils who are more able are not given enough chances to work at their own pace and the work they are given is not always hard enough.
- Marking is not used consistently to inform pupils how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons involving 15 teachers.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and reviewed documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils’ progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils’ work. They heard groups of pupils read and spoke with others about behaviour and safety arrangements at the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed by parents who spoke with inspectors at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maura Docherty

Additional Inspector

Jim McVeigh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than an average-sized primary school.
- In September 2011 the school took in an extra Reception class so that in the present Year 1 there are three classes.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- An increasing proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who start at the school speaking English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is average.
- In November 2011 the governing body took over the management of the pre-school which is located on the school site. This is subject to separate reporting and inspection arrangements, as is the children's centre which is also located on the school site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make alternative provision for any pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching which is outstanding and so raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - sharing more widely the outstanding practice that is already present in the school
 - making sure that teachers plan activities that always stretch the more-able pupils to learn at a swift pace
 - giving pupils more opportunities to work independently
 - ensuring that marking is used consistently to show pupils how they can improve their work and giving them time to act on teachers' comments.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join Reception with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. Effective procedures for children starting school, including developing partnerships with parents and 'play and stay' sessions, ensure children settle quickly. Children make good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of good teaching.
- All groups of pupils make good progress from this point and leave Year 6 with skills and knowledge that are broadly average.
- Attainment in both English and mathematics has seen a rapid rise over the past three years. Gaps between groups have closed. Standards rose in the 2012 national tests at the end of Year 6 with an increased number of pupils attaining Level 5 in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in writing has accelerated due to improved teaching, a faster pace of learning and good opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. Writing tasks are well structured and supported so that all pupils can achieve well. They often start with a considerable amount of discussion, which develops vocabulary well. However, presentation is not always of the highest standard.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide a counsellor, play therapy, music tuition and additional teaching assistants who give extra teaching support. As a result of this, the eligible pupils make at least good progress so that the gap between their achievement and that of their peers has narrowed quickly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported by well-trained teaching assistants which results in good progress for most pupils. The additional support that these pupils receive is managed very effectively by the deputy-headteacher and special educational needs coordinator and is well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. Pupils have a good grasp of the sounds that letters make (phonics) and they are competent and confident readers. By the end of Year 6, their attainment in reading is broadly average. All pupils, including those who are at an early stage of learning English, are immersed in a rich environment of language, vocabulary and books which develops language skills well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. An increasing number of lessons are outstanding, although not all teachers have had the opportunity to learn from the examples of very best practice in the school.
- Teachers know their pupils well so their lesson planning generally matches pupils' different abilities. However, in a small minority of lessons, teachers do not always ensure that more-able pupils are fully stretched and their learning slows.
- Teachers make effective use of new technologies including interactive whiteboards and visualisers, to show what is expected or how pupils' work can be improved. This approach is very effective in developing pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Classrooms are bright and pupils' learning is supported through helpful displays.
- Teachers create opportunities to write in many different contexts, which develop pupils' interests and stamina for writing successfully. The use of new technologies, including 'netbooks' and other electronic devices, motivates pupils well.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. The few pupils who find it difficult to control their behaviour are managed effectively by the teachers and adults assigned to support them. Pupils respond positively to the school's reward systems.
- In a small number of lessons, teachers tend to exercise too much control and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their independence or explore their own ideas.

- Marking is inconsistent across the school and between subjects. Not all pupils have the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments or know how they can improve their work.
- Promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the school's culture and is promoted well. The rich mix of cultures and religions within the school is used effectively to promote understanding and to celebrate cultural differences.
- The school is well resourced so that teachers are able to create many memorable experiences for the pupils. This was seen during the inspection when the Reception class used the Mongolian yurt, situated on the school field, for storytelling and other activities.
- All groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, are taught well and make good progress. Transition into the school is well managed so that teachers are able to quickly identify and meet the pupils' needs.
- Reading is taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants successfully promote the pupils' knowledge and use of phonics. They provide many opportunities for pupils to read, both for enjoyment and to find information to support their topic work. The increased use of the library and workshops for parents has helped to develop a successful reading culture within the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Support for pupils and their families is well organised and highly effective. Parents said that staff are very supportive and know the pupils extremely well.
- Pupils' respect for adults and each other, and their clear understanding of how they are expected to behave, are strong features of lessons that enable most to proceed without disruption. Pupils say they like the rewards they get for good work and behaviour. School records confirm that pupils' behaviour is good on a daily basis and has improved greatly over time.
- The school has close working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Attendance has improved and is now average, reflecting the effective work of all staff.
- Parents said their children are safe and well cared for. This view is reflected in the confidence expressed by pupils that they are safe at school and that any bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of bullying, for example cyber-bullying, and have great trust in the headteacher to solve any difficulties that may arise. The 'grin and grumble' box is used regularly by pupils to communicate with staff who ensure that there is no discrimination and that all pupils have the best opportunities to achieve.
- Pupils take responsibility well. For example 'playground pals' watch out for good behaviour which is rewarded and celebrated in assemblies.
- Pupils are helped to develop a range of strategies so they are able to manage everyday risks for themselves, such as those associated with the internet, fireworks and drugs.

The leadership and management are good

- The good leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders and governors, provides a strong and clear direction for the school. Senior leaders have skills that combine well together and this is beneficial for the school's improvement. High expectations are shared by all staff and there is a strong sense of teamwork.
- Relationships across the school and with parents and the local community are strong.
- Parents and pupils rightly report that the school is effective in discouraging all forms of discrimination and works vigorously to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

- All leaders have helped to create a caring environment in which pupils are nurtured well. They ensure that pupils in need of additional support are identified quickly and given effective support to help boost their performance.
 - Rigorous checks are made to find out how well pupils achieve. Senior leaders routinely check that all pupils are on track to make good progress from their starting points.
 - The headteacher manages the performance of teachers effectively, with clear links between the salary that teachers receive and pupils' good progress. Teachers are set precise targets linked to pupils' progress, thus promoting good or better teaching.
 - Middle leaders, known as lead learners at the school, are increasingly supporting staff to improve their teaching skills, although they are at an early stage of monitoring pupils' progress. Their use of 'impact sheets' ensures that developments are well planned and effectively evaluated.
 - Leaders and managers know the school well. There are clear plans to make it even better. The school's consistent, marked improvement over time demonstrates good capacity to improve.
 - The Early Years manager is developing consistency of practice quickly across the Reception classes and the pre-school.
 - The headteacher's and deputy headteacher's presence around the school and at the start and end of the school day is highly effective in cementing strong relationships with parents. It was evident during the inspection that both leaders know the pupils and their families extremely well.
 - Learning is enriched tremendously well through a wide range of after-school activities and with opportunities for pupils to play musical instruments. Residential visits, whole-school events and enrichment days with opportunities for kayaking, climbing and snow-boarding, and additional opportunities to develop sporting and creative skills add further enhancement.
 - As a successful school, the local authority appropriately provides light-touch support and access to effective professional development for all staff, which has contributed to improvements in teaching.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body makes use of its valuable training from the local authority to both support and monitor the work of the school effectively. Governors understand the school's performance information well and how the school has improved in relation to other schools. They ask appropriate questions about how decisions will affect pupils' learning. The governing body is regularly kept informed about how teaching is improving. This has led to good decisions being made on the rewards that teachers receive, effective allocation of the school's finances and the pupil premium, which it monitors through regular visits. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively, ensuring, for example, that procedures for safeguarding pupils are well managed, regularly reviewed and fully meet the regulatory requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110318
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	405278

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	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tessa Haddon
Headteacher	Marcus Faulkner
Date of previous school inspection	30 November–1 December 2010
Telephone number	01296 488331
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