

Bruton Primary School

Higher Backway, Bruton, Somerset. BA10 0DP

Inspection dates

12–13 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough pupils achieve well or make consistently good progress over time, especially in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in writing.
- Teachers do not always have sufficiently high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. The quality of teaching varies and is inconsistent over time.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 because work is not always hard enough for them.
- Leadership roles beyond the executive headteacher and head of school have not been developed. As a result, leadership responsibilities for raising pupils' achievement are not widespread or effective.
- The school's effectiveness has declined since the previous inspection. Checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress have not yet been fully effective in tackling the school's weaknesses, for example in writing.
- Not all teachers make effective use of information about pupils' progress to ensure work is set at the right level for all abilities.

The school has the following strengths

- The new senior leaders are committed to improving both achievement and the quality of teaching and are clear about how to do so.
- Pupils achieve good standards in reading in all year groups.
- Children settle quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress.
- Staff and pupils share a strong belief in the values of their school and are proud to be part of it. Consequently, pupils behave well, feel safe and get on well together.
- The governors provide a good level of challenge as well as being supportive.

Information about this inspection

- All staff were observed teaching. A total of 16 lessons and one assembly were seen. This included four joint lesson observations with the executive headteacher and head of school.
- The inspectors heard pupils from Years 2 and 3 read individually and observed the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they represent).
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, a group of pupils, the special educational needs coordinator and the Chair of the Governing Body plus three other governors.
- A telephone call was made to the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors looked at a range of evidence which included the school's improvement plan, the school's data for tracking the progress and attainment of individual pupils and specific groups, the school's checks on how well it is doing, curriculum and lesson plans, and governing body documentation.
- The inspectors also looked at the work pupils were doing in their books.
- Informal discussions with parents took place at the beginning and end of the school day and the 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered. Responses from 19 staff questionnaires were also taken into account.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was observed, both inside and outside the classroom, and the school's safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bruton is an average-sized primary school situated near Wincanton.
- The vast majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- Pupils are taught in nine mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average. There are currently only a small number of children on the school roll with a parent in the armed services and none in local authority care.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or through statements of special educational needs is significantly below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- In April 2013, Bruton federated with Upton Noble Primary School to create the East Somerset Federation. The federation is led by an executive headteacher. The current head of school and executive headteacher took up their posts in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching so that it is at least good by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - have high expectations for what pupils can achieve
 - provide harder work for the more-able pupils and appropriate levels of work for all other pupils
 - improve the consistency of the use of assessment in lessons and of written feedback so that they are both of a uniformly high standard and pupils know how to improve
 - understand what they have to do to improve their practice and are regularly observed teaching in the classroom.
- Raise pupils' attainment in mathematics and writing by:
 - building on the good practice in teaching in these subjects already evident in some classes
 - increasing the proportion of more-able pupils who reach above average levels of attainment.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - establishing a senior leadership team to assist the executive headteacher and head of school in raising pupils' achievement
 - developing the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders
 - ensuring that the school's evaluation of its performance is more rigorous and robust.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too few pupils make good progress. Not enough has been done to build on the good start children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make sure pupils achieve as well as they can by the time they leave Year 6, especially in mathematics, and to a lesser extent in writing.
- In recent years, pupils have made good progress through Key Stage 1. However, the provisional results for 2013 achieved at the end of Year 2 show a drop in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in comparison with the levels attained in 2011 and 2012.
- Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, as measured by national tests at the end of Year 6, has typically been broadly in line with national averages. However, in 2013, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in mathematics was below average.
- The weak performance and progress in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 contrast strongly with the standards attained in reading which have been consistently well above national averages in recent years.
- Standards achieved in writing at the end of both key stages were slightly above the national average, but not as high as those attained in reading. The school's leadership has identified this as an area in need of improvement and has put in place strategies which are already beginning to close this gap between subject areas.
- The school encourages pupils to read regularly at home and at school. The teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) is well established and ensures the continuous development of pupils' advanced reading skills from Reception upwards. The timetable provides pupils of all ages with regular opportunities to immerse themselves in books during each school day.
- The pupil premium funding is helping the majority of eligible pupils to make the progress needed to ensure that the few pupils entitled to free school meals and who have a parent in the armed forces make as much progress as other groups. There are too few pupils involved to make meaningful comparisons between their attainment and that of their peers at the end of Year 6.
- There are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by groups of pupils, such as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, the more able pupils are not always provided with work which offers them the challenge they require to make the progress they are capable of, especially in mathematics and writing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is getting better, it requires improvement because it is not consistently good enough in every class to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Lesson plans show that teachers have a good understanding of different subjects and set clear learning objectives. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support individual pupils or small groups in their learning.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve, especially the more-able pupils. In some lessons, introductions are too long and all pupils are expected to complete the same tasks, regardless of their ability. As a result, a number of pupils fall short of achieving their full potential. This is because teachers do not consistently use information relating to pupils' progress effectively in order to make certain that work is set at the right level for individuals and groups.
- Class teachers do not always make sure that basic mathematical skills and concepts are fully understood and that misconceptions are successfully corrected. In some mathematics lessons,

activities are not related closely enough to real life and are not made relevant or exciting.

- The quality of marking has improved since the school was last inspected and there are some good examples of where pupils are quickly following up on the guidance offered by their teachers. However, this improvement is not consistent and some marking does not offer enough guidance for pupils to know how to make their work better.
- There are positive relationships between teachers and pupils in lessons and this empathy supports pupils' learning.
- In a number of lessons teachers deliver well-planned, lively lessons which are enjoyed. Teachers' questioning ensures that pupils concentrate on the current task and all pupils are encouraged to play an active role in learning activities.
- Reading is a strength throughout the school. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils' reading skills. Regular phonics sessions, guided reading activities and the Bug Club programme contribute to the development of pupils' reading skills and their desire to 'see what happens next'.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium receive extra help from teachers and support staff when they require it. This funding is used in a variety of ways, for example to provide small group work, enrichment activities and one-to-one support for pupils requiring extra help with their learning. Much of this support takes place in The Den, a well-resourced dedicated room, where pupils can be calm and focus on their learning.
- Most staff at Bruton demonstrates a great deal of potential, as well as the ability and willingness to improve and refine their classroom practice. The standards that could be achieved were epitomised by a comment made by a Key Stage 2 pupil during a well taught English lesson, 'I wouldn't mind coming to school on a Saturday if all lessons were like this one!'
- Teaching is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Activities are carefully planned to cover all areas of learning, both indoors and outdoors. Children are helped to develop self-confidence and enthusiastically respond to the many opportunities provided. Staff are skilled in ensuring every opportunity is taken to encourage children to make the best possible progress.
- All staff are proficient in teaching information and communication technology (ICT) and every class is well equipped with notebooks which are used as tools in all areas of the curriculum.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, even when lessons do not fully capture their imagination and interest or when teachers spend too long explaining a learning activity. No lessons were seen that were disrupted by inappropriate behaviour.
- Pupils contribute a great deal to the life of the school. They enthusiastically take on numerous jobs around the school for which they are paid 'Bruton Bucks'. These jobs include 'Hirers and Firers', 'Assembly Angels' and 'Dining Room Directors'. The school works hard to generate and maintain an inclusive family atmosphere.
- After a period of below-average attendance, rates have improved this year and are on track to match those of most other schools. However, the school could take further action, such as sharing its progress towards the attendance targets with parents. Pupils are punctual in arriving at school.
- Pupils feel safe at Bruton. They understand various forms of bullying, such as those relating to race, name calling and cyber bullying, but say that it does not happen often. They feel that when there are incidents of inappropriate behaviour they are dealt with effectively.
- Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils display a genuine respect for their teachers. Staff act as good role models and know their pupils well as individuals.
- Effective behaviour policies are in place and understood by all pupils and applied consistently. A scrutiny of records and observations during the inspection confirms that pupils' behaviour over time is good.

- A range of activities is available for pupils at lunchtimes, together with access to extensive outdoor areas, ensuring that playtime is harmonious, energetic and much enjoyed.
- The majority of parents and pupils who were spoken to or who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) considered that the pupils are well behaved, the school was caring and that teachers were approachable and willing to listen.
- The school has close working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because a new senior leadership team has not been established and the roles of middle leaders are not fully developed. Consequently, responsibilities for raising achievement and improving teaching and learning are not widely distributed and lie with the executive headteacher and head of school.
- The executive headteacher and head of school have been in post since the start of the academic year. Staff, parents and pupils are adjusting to the new management structure as well as changes relating to the federation of Bruton with its partner primary school.
- The school's current self-evaluation of its performance and overall provision is not rigorous enough and is not yet sufficiently robust and challenging enough in order for Bruton to realise its full and undoubted potential. However, the school improvement plan has realistic targets and focuses on improving the standards achieved by all pupils, particularly by the more able.
- The school's new leadership has already raised the aspirations and motivation of the teaching staff, who operate well as a team and are supportive of each other. Morale is good and all display an increased level of commitment to improve their classroom practice. Current data indicate that the rate of pupils' progress is beginning to improve.
- Revised performance management procedures are increasingly holding teachers to account for their own pupils' progress, and the information gathered from regular lesson observations is used well to set the teachers' performance targets and decide teachers' pay and internal promotion.
- Information on pupils' attainment and progress is accurately analysed and recorded. Termly meetings are held to discuss individual pupils' progress, identify any pupils not making expected progress and to promptly provide appropriate intervention sessions and additional support.
- Improvements to attendance, pupil progress and the quality of teaching during the current year are evidence of the school's capacity for future improvement.
- The school's checks on the quality of classroom practice are improving, but still need to become more regular and rigorous. Even so, the senior leaders and governors try to ensure that there is a close link between teachers' pay and their performance in class.
- The local authority has provided appropriate advice and support for the school.
- The school has worked hard to help parents understand the reasons for federation and kept them well informed during the process. After some initial reservations, the majority of parents can identify the benefits for their children and state their confidence in the new leadership of the school. The school works well with the great majority of parents, although a minority registered concerns regarding the detail and timing of the school's communication with parents.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils conform with statutory requirements and demonstrate good practice. No form of discrimination is tolerated, reflecting Bruton's strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunity for all.
- Bruton provides a range of residential visits, trips out and visitors to the school. Pupils also appreciate the growing number of clubs that are available after school.
- Well-established links with the local and international community and a range of partnerships extend the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and understanding. Since 2004 the school has developed close links with schools in Zambia, incorporating annual teacher exchanges, penpals and an exchange of class project work.

■ The school has recently extended pupils' sporting opportunities and has allocated the new primary school sports funding appropriately to extend pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and provide opportunities to achieve it. Pupils now take part in regular sports fixtures and tournaments. During the inspection, 25 pupils were observed preparing enthusiastically to take part in the after-school running club.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors know their school well and have been fully involved in the process of establishing the East Somerset Federation with Upton Noble Primary School. They have supported the school successfully in recent years, despite declining numbers and a reduction in the number of classes. The governors have all been allocated specific areas of responsibility which reinforce their overall insight into the school, including the monitoring of safeguarding requirements, which are all in place. They visit the school regularly and receive detailed information from the senior leaders regarding the quality of teaching and how Bruton's performance compares with that of other schools. They are also well informed about the performance management process that is now in place and have a clear understanding of the links between teachers' performance and salary scale progression. Governors have undertaken all statutory training. They closely monitor all aspects of the school's spending and income, including the additional sports funding and how the pupil premium funding is allocated and the success of its impact on pupils' achievement.

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	123899
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	427357
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Kiddell
Headteacher	Mark Solomon
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 June 2011
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