

Inspection of a good school: Bowhill Primary School

Buddle Lane, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon EX4 1JT

Inspection dates:

12–13 November 2019

Outcome

Bowhill Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Bowhill try hard and are proud of their work. Their books are full of well-presented writing, diagrams and maps. This is because teachers expect pupils to concentrate and do their best in all lessons. Displays around the school celebrate what pupils know and can do across the whole curriculum.

This large school is a busy place. Yet pupils move around the school independently and sensibly. They follow the rules and routines and work well together. Every parent or carer who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire said their child felt safe in school. Teachers are skilled at helping all pupils behave well, even those few who struggle with their behaviour. Pupils say that, if there is any bullying, they trust staff to sort it out.

Children are well cared for in the early years. They enjoy the challenges they meet in their exciting indoor and outdoor learning areas. They can work with concentration, such as when I saw them measuring Jack's beanstalk with a programmable toy. Staff keep parents well informed about what their children learn.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and teachers have confidence in each other. They work together to do the best for pupils. Teachers say that the new curriculum plans help them to know what to teach and when. They say that pupils know and remember more as a result.

In geography, pupils' previous learning about the river Exe meant that they began their new project on Egypt already understanding maps of rivers. They, therefore, quickly spotted the source and mouth of the river Nile. They worked out that, if most land was desert, then the green by the Nile showed that land was fertile for agriculture. Leaders know there is still work to do to make sure that all learning is as strong as this in all subjects. Teachers have different strengths in different subjects and explain some things better than others.

Leaders surround pupils with books to encourage them to read. The school won the local library challenge for the number of books read in the holiday. Teachers read stories daily to their classes. Most children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 know the sounds that letters make. Teachers use a quiet room in which to read with pupils so that they can check that pupils read accurately.

Across the school, there are pupils who need to catch up with their peers in reading. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although such pupils are given extra help, adults who read with them do not always help them to think about what they have read. Pupils read accurately but without enough understanding. Older pupils who find reading difficult say they struggle to explain what they read. Teachers sometimes move on too quickly before checking pupils' understanding.

Leaders have clear plans to raise the standard of pupils' writing. Pupils across the school spell accurately. Older pupils always write in ink because their handwriting is well formed and fluent. Work from 'free writing Friday' shows that pupils are keen writers and remember much of what they have been taught.

While teachers in the early years get children off to a good start with reading, a number of children move into Year 1 still struggling with writing letters. This slows children's progress. Leaders know that the most able pupils should achieve more. Sometimes, teachers do not use skilled teaching assistants well enough to support pupils to develop their basic skills or challenge those pupils forging ahead. Teachers in key stage 2 explain complex grammar clearly. Pupils write enthusiastically but do not always act on their teachers' advice to make their writing precise and accurate.

Leaders make sure that all pupils with SEND play a full part in the life of the school. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with subject leaders and teachers, giving them good advice to help pupils succeed in class. Teachers in the early years get children off to a good start with reading. However, a number of children move into Year 1 still struggling with writing letters. This slows their progress.

There are wide opportunities for pupils to learn new skills through the clubs at lunchtime and after school. Pupils are particularly encouraged to be outside and active. They talk enthusiastically about the different sports on offer and the school camps and residential visits.

Leaders help pupils develop positive attitudes towards caring for the environment. Pupils, such as the 'green bin goblins' and members of the school council, take their responsibilities seriously. Pupils are widening their understanding of life in Britain today. They join up with a school in London to work and play with pupils from different communities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear procedures to ensure that pupils at risk of harm are protected. Staff are trained well and understand their responsibilities. Leaders update staff regularly on matters of safeguarding.

Staff know pupils well and are vigilant for their welfare. They report any concerns clearly and promptly. Leaders persist in challenging other agencies if they feel that families are not getting the help they need.

The school checks all adults who work with pupils to ensure that they are safe to do so. The records of checks are managed well and are up to date.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers have good subject knowledge. In others, it can be a bit patchy. Leaders should continue to develop teachers' subject knowledge so that new learning is explained clearly and helps pupils to remember what they have learned.
- The teaching of reading has been strengthened. However, a number of children in the early years and pupils across the school need to catch up. From the earliest stages of reading, teachers should help pupils to understand what they read. In key stage 2, teachers should check that pupils who need to catch up understand the text fully.
- Children who enter key stage 1 without basic skills need to catch up quickly. Leaders should continue to raise standards in writing, particularly in the early years. Teaching assistants should be deployed more effectively to enable teachers to meet all pupils' needs in writing lessons, particularly pupils' grammatical accuracy and precision of sentence structure.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Bowhill Primary School, to be good in November 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	143193
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10111592
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	486
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brian Cook
Headteacher	Caren Brooks
Website	www.bowhill.devon.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- On 1 January 2017, Bowhill Primary School converted to an academy and joined the Exeter Learning Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- I held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. I also met with subject leaders and with teachers. As part of these meetings, I reviewed the school's plans for the curriculum.
- I met with the chief executive officer of the Exeter Learning Academy Trust and spoke to the chair of the trustees on the telephone. I met with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- I reviewed the school's work with pupils with SEND in lessons and through discussion with the school's SENCo.
- I talked to the school's leaders for safeguarding about the work of the school to keep pupils safe. I reviewed their policies and the records of actions they had taken in response to concerns. I spoke with pupils and staff about safeguarding in the school.
- I visited lessons in all areas of the school, reviewed pupils' work and spoke to pupils about three subjects in particular. These were reading, writing and geography. I

discussed these subjects with teachers and leaders.

- I met with groups of pupils to hear them read and discussed with them the books they enjoy. I asked these and other pupils for their views of the school. I met with the school council and considered their opinions on how the school should continue to improve. I spoke to pupils and staff at lunchtime and visited the art club. I took account of the 252 responses to the pupils' online survey.
- I spoke to parents as they brought their children to school. I considered the 131 responses to Parent View and parents' additional comments. I also reviewed the 43 responses to the staff survey. I also checked whether leaders considered teachers' workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Wendy Marriott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019