



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Barn Croft Primary School

Waltham Forest Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 27-28 May 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

© Crown copyright 2004. This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Inspection reports are available on the Ofsted web site (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Contents

| Section | Page |
|---|-------------|
| Basic information about the school | iv |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Main findings | 1 |
| Key issues | 3 |
| Inspection findings | 3 |
| Standards achieved by the pupils | 3 |
| The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development | 5 |
| The quality of education | 6 |
| Leadership and management | 7 |
| Implementation of the action plan | 8 |
| Appendix – Information about the inspection | 9 |

Basic information about the school

| | |
|--|---|
| Name of school: | Barn Croft Primary School |
| Type of school: | Primary with Nursery |
| Status: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 3 to 11 years |
| Headteacher: | Ms L Chesworth |
| Address of school: | 2 Brunel Road Walthamstow London E17 8SB |
| Telephone: | 020 8521 1145 |
| Name and address of appropriate authority: | The governing body, address as above |
| Chair of governors: | Ms J Pearce |
| Local education authority area: | Waltham Forest |
| Unique reference number: | 131057 |
| Name of reporting inspector: | Mr D Jones HMI |
| Dates of inspection: | 27-28 May 2004 |

Introduction

1. Barn Croft Primary School is situated in Walthamstow in the north east of London. The school lies at the centre of an area of urban redevelopment surrounded by a mixture of housing association properties and private housing. There are 211 pupils on roll aged between 3 and 11, and the school is smaller than average. Most of the pupils come from the immediate area, which is socially and economically disadvantaged. Just over one third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school's intake is ethnically diverse; the largest groups being from white British, Pakistani and African-Caribbean backgrounds. One third of the pupils speak English as an additional language; a high proportion. One quarter of the pupils have special educational needs and four have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average.
2. The school was inspected in November 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.
3. The governors drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of November 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on three occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In May 2004 two HMI inspected the school, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of November 2002.

Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. The main findings of the inspection are:
 - the school has improved significantly since the inspection in 2002, it is now a calm and stimulating place where the pupils are keen to learn;
 - the results of the 2003 national tests at Key Stage 1 showed a significant improvement compared to those achieved in 2002. The results in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national figures. The unconfirmed results of the 2004 national tests indicate that the strong position established in 2003 has been consolidated. Across the school, standards in the core subjects have risen. This year, the school entered pupils for the Year 6 national tests for the first time;
 - standards in numeracy are rising. The pupils' attainment in mathematics in Years 2 to 5 is broadly comparable to the levels expected for the pupils' ages. However, the school's assessments suggest that the proportion of pupils in Year 6 who are expected to achieve the target Level 4 in the National Curriculum tests in 2004 will be smaller than that achieved nationally last year;
 - standards of speaking and listening are generally in line with those expected for the pupils' ages. The recent improvements to teaching and provision are leading to raised standards. Standards of reading are satisfactory and

beginning to improve in Year 5. Standards of writing are generally at expected levels. Many pupils' books demonstrate improved standards of writing as the year has progressed;

- the pupils made satisfactory progress in 17 of the 18 lessons; progress was good in ten and very good in one lesson. The standards attained and the progress the pupils make have improved steadily during the year;
- the pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress; this is because of the overall improvement in teaching and effective class-based support;
- the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were at least satisfactory in all lessons, including 15 in which they were good or very good. The behaviour of the pupils about the school was good. In lessons, almost all co-operated with each other and with the staff. The younger pupils shared and played sensibly and older pupils took progressively more responsibility. Most of the pupils were aware of their teacher's expectations and did their best to rise to them, although a few of the younger pupils had difficulty in sustaining this throughout the day;
- attendance for the school year so far is 94.2 per cent, which is a little below the average for primary schools. Unauthorised absence is low. Punctuality is satisfactory;
- the school makes broadly satisfactory provision for the pupils' personal development. Assemblies contribute well to the pupils' social, cultural and moral education. However, provision is less secure for their spiritual development and insufficient time is allocated in some classes for personal, social and health education (PSHE);
- the quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory but some inconsistencies remain.. In 17 of the 18 lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better, including nine lessons in which it was good and three in which it was very good;
- the curriculum meets the requirements to be broad and balanced although there is a heavy emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Whole school curriculum planning is underdeveloped; however, opportunities for independent learning are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 3 to 5. The resources for learning are insufficient to support further improvement in standards;
- the school's arrangements for assessment are secure and provide useful information for the teachers, who set suitable targets for the pupils, particularly in the core subjects. Assessment is playing a significant role in raising the pupils' attainment, particularly in English and increasingly in other subjects;
- the leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are good. The headteacher has displayed a single-minded determination to improve all aspects of the school. The recently appointed deputy headteacher brings useful experience to complete the balance of the senior management team. The

leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. Subject co-ordinators are developing an understanding of their roles; the most effective lead their areas of responsibility with growing confidence;

- the work of the governing body in holding the school to account has improved significantly since the inspection in November 2002. The governance of the school is satisfactory;
- financial management and development planning are good. Extensive monitoring, evaluation and support by senior managers, governors and the local education authority (LEA) have helped the school move forward;
- the provision for the pupils who are learning English as an additional language is satisfactory. The care and support for the pupils is good and often very good. Teachers and learning support assistants are observant and quick to praise. The links with parents and the community are now good. An increasing proportion of parents regularly attends school events; parents appreciate the support and guidance the school provides;
- the private sector company that provides support services to the LEA has worked effectively with the school on all of the initiatives detailed in the school's action plan. An appropriately structured plan to monitor and support the school over the next academic year is in place.

Key issues

6. In order to improve the pupils' quality of education further, the governors, headteacher, senior managers and staff need to:

- continue to raise standards;
- improve the management of the curriculum, including the use of time and the range of opportunities for the foundation subjects and PSHE;
- continue to promote consistently effective teaching and learning;
- improve the range of resources to support learning.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. The results of the 2003 national tests at Key Stage 1 showed a significant improvement on those achieved in 2002. The results for reading and writing were above the national figures and well above those of similar schools. The results in mathematics were well above the national figure and were very high when compared to similar schools. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics was well above that achieved nationally and very high when compared to similar schools. The unconfirmed results of the 2004 national tests indicate that the strong position established in 2003 has been consolidated. Across the school, standards in the core subjects have risen, and

the results of optional tests have improved. This year, the school entered pupils for the Year 6 national tests for the first time.

8. The pupils made satisfactory progress in 17 of the 18 lessons; progress was good in ten and very good in one lesson. The standards attained and the progress the pupils make have improved steadily during the year. Most pupils in Year 6 made satisfactory progress during the year; although many were initially reluctant learners, some proved capable of working above the level expected for their age.

9. Standards of speaking and listening are generally in line with those expected for the pupils' ages. The recent improvements to teaching and provision are leading to raised standards. Most teachers encourage the use of 'talk partners' and give pupils the opportunity to rehearse and refine responses before making them to the whole class. There are regular opportunities for pupils to speak in public; for example, by contributing to assemblies. The most articulate pupils in Years 3 to 5 expressed themselves clearly, adapting what they said to their audience. However, the lower-achieving pupils in Year 6 struggled to explain their thinking and tended to answer in short phrases or single words. The pupils' listening skills are satisfactory and often good. Standards of reading are satisfactory overall. Very strong literacy teaching in Year 5 has produced a significant improvement in the pupils' reading skills. Most pupils have a favourite book on their table which they read at various points in the school day, and some confidently tackle challenging authors. Non-fiction is tackled with confidence by most pupils and notably in Years 3 and 4. All classes in Key Stage 2 negotiated contents pages and indexes to find specific information. The most-able pupils in all year groups read with fluency and expression, but the least able struggled with unfamiliar words and were hesitant when reading aloud.

10. Standards of writing are generally at expected levels. Higher-achieving pupils sustain their writing, holding the attention of the reader by using interesting vocabulary. The least-able writers produce simple descriptive sentences that use a limited vocabulary and include errors of punctuation. The books of many pupils show that standards of writing have improved over the year.

11. Standards in mathematics are rising. The pupils' attainment in mathematics in Years 1 to 5 is broadly comparable to national expectations. The pupils learn about a broad range of topics through activities that reflect the national programmes and guidance, though with relatively little attention to handling data. The overall attainment of the pupils has been adversely affected by variations in the quality of teaching, but progress in mathematics is becoming more consistent across the school and is broadly satisfactory. The youngest pupils learn about number and quantity and extend their vocabulary of shape, location and motion. In Key Stage 1, they extend their knowledge of number bonds, digits and place value, multiplication, two-dimensional shapes and capacity. Those in Year 2 have begun to use mathematical language and understand relationships between numbers, digits and quantity. Many recognised shapes, counted in simple multiples, classified numbers in appropriate ways and applied basic operations to small numbers.

12. In Key Stage 2, the pupils learn more about fractions, co-ordinates and measurement; acquiring a wider mathematical vocabulary and developing their skills. Pupils in Year 5 made efficient use of formulae to calculate the areas of simple and complex shapes. Some of the more-able pupils explained the mathematical ideas they used in plotting graphs and described the spatial relationships. In Year 6, some of the pupils had a clear command of

appropriate ideas when investigating pentominoes, but many lacked confidence in using the appropriate mathematical language. The school's assessments suggest that the proportion of the pupils in Year 6 who are expected to achieve the target Level 4 in the National Curriculum tests in 2004 will be smaller than that achieved nationally last year.

13. In science, standards of attainment are rising as a result of good planning. The pupils cover a suitable range of topics and understand a range of appropriate scientific terms and processes. For example, Year 4 pupils explained the stages of filtration in the water purification process. The school is beginning to allocate more time to practical and investigative work. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are at expected levels and the pupils demonstrate appropriate skills. The school makes good use of its limited ICT facilities to enhance work across the different subjects of the curriculum.

14. Only a small number of lessons was seen in the foundation subjects, but there were examples of good work. For example, in a well-organised art lesson in Year 2, the pupils applied paint in the style of Monet and some pupils created impressive copies of the artist's paintings.

15. The pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress; this is because of the overall improvement in teaching and effective class-based support. All pupils who join the school part way through the year are assessed by an EMAG teaching assistant who plans their programme of individual support in conjunction with senior managers. The school has made good use of reliable assessment information to develop well-organised small group and booster sessions. These sessions were well taught by learning support assistants who made good use of resources from the national numeracy and literacy strategies to ensure continuity and challenge.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were at least satisfactory in each of the 18 lessons, including 15 in which they were good or very good. The behaviour of the pupils in lessons and about the school was good. In lessons, almost all co-operated with each other and with the staff. The younger pupils shared and played sensibly and older pupils took progressively more responsibility in simple tasks for their teachers. They were courteous and they moved about the school calmly with due regard for property and premises. The pupils co-operated well in a variety of lunch and playtime activities.

17. The school has secure arrangements to maintain acceptable behaviour and to promote improvements where they are needed. There is a clear, simple and well understood code to guide behaviour in the classrooms. The staff model and encourage courtesy and are watchful and active in reinforcing sound classroom behaviour. A gardening club and the school council promote care for the environment. Lunch time supervisors provide helpful leadership for suitable games, help pupils make up if they fall out and organise activities such as a club for vulnerable pupils. Good behaviour is celebrated in classrooms and assemblies. The pupils have confidence in the staff and know where to find advice if there is trouble. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with firmly and quickly. The number of exclusions has fallen from a relatively high level; there have been no exclusions since the start of the spring term.

18. In lessons, most of the pupils show interest and are prepared to work steadily at their tasks. In the Foundation Stage, the pupils persevered with suitable activities such as imaginative play, constructing masks and individual reading. In other classes, many pupils engaged steadily with tasks such as reading, discussions, using computers and applying new skills in writing or mathematics, even on occasions when the tasks did not properly match their needs. The large majority of pupils were aware of their teacher's expectations and did their best to rise to them, although a few of the younger pupils had difficulty in sustaining this throughout the day.

19. Attendance has increased by two percentage points and is currently a little below the average for primary schools. Many of the pupils are keen to come to school and punctuality is satisfactory. The rate of unauthorised absence has decreased during this year to a very low level.

20. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Most of them have a good understanding of right and wrong and this shows in their behaviour. Most pupils are interested in the school's activities; for example, raising money for charities, such as the Save the Children Fund. The older pupils are aware of the varied backgrounds of their peers and accept with some interest the opportunities this presents for learning about other cultural traditions. Many of the pupils bring a lively spirit to their work in school and respond with strong interest to the challenges provided.

21. The school makes broadly satisfactory provision for the pupils' personal development. Class teachers take opportunities as they arise to guide individuals towards co-operation and good behaviour. Some classes follow a programme of personal education, and the school plans to extend this more consistently across the school. Awareness and understanding of cultural diversity are promoted by the explicit recognition of different faiths represented in the school; for example, in the celebration of festivals and visits to places of worship. Contributions are also made to pupils' spiritual development, though this is less pronounced. Religious education plays a part in this, but at times there are insufficient suitable artefacts to stimulate and reinforce learning. Assemblies include music and routines to create special occasions each day. These frequently lead pupils to reflection and prayer, but do not always constitute an act of collective worship.

The quality of education

22. The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall and sometimes good; however some inconsistencies remain. In 17 of the 18 lessons, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better, including nine which were good and three that were very good. The teachers' planning was often good. Resources were well used, and the expectations of the quantity and quality of the work were reasonably high. In the best lessons, the strengths of the teaching included: good subject knowledge; challenging and intuitive questioning; productive relationships; and a lively teaching style which encouraged pupils to think hard. In some of the lessons that were satisfactory overall the following weaknesses were apparent; insecure subject knowledge, a slow pace and an inability to catch and hold the attention of some of the pupils. Unsatisfactory teaching included a number of these weaknesses.

23. The marking of the pupils' work was up-to-date, clearly expressed and helpful. Most teachers linked their comments to the pupils' targets and offered suggestions for improvement. Homework is set regularly for all the pupils and is used effectively to enhance

learning; for example, in a Year 5 class, spellings were suitably matched to the pupils' different abilities. The teaching assistants were active and often gave good support to the individuals and groups with whom they worked.

24. The school's arrangements for assessment provide helpful information for the teachers who set suitable targets for the pupils, particularly in the core subjects. Assessment is playing a helpful role in raising the pupils' attainment, particularly in English and increasingly in other subjects. A comprehensive database of information about the pupils' progress is being compiled. Since the start of this school year, assessment information has been collected on all the pupils each term. The findings have been shared with the pupils and targets set. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 understand their targets and some seek specific guidance from their teacher on how to adapt their work to achieve the outcome they require. The school's analysis of assessment information shows that the vast majority of the pupils have made at least the expected progress.

25. The curriculum is broad and balanced although there is a heavy emphasis on literacy and numeracy. This was a deliberate decision based on the findings of the inspection that made the school subject to special measures and the need rapidly to fill the gaps in the pupils' knowledge. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy and their "catch up" programmes have been well used. Whole-school curriculum planning is underdeveloped; however, opportunities for independent learning are satisfactory overall, and good in Years 4 and 5. There are suitable plans to broaden the curriculum by teaching key skills through different subjects; for example, teaching literacy and ICT through the foundation subjects. Extracurricular activities, visits and music assemblies enhance the provision.

26. The school's environment is attractive with bright, lively displays celebrating the pupils' successes. Although classrooms are rather cramped, accommodation is generally well used. The resources for learning are insufficient to support the further improvement in standards. The school library has a limited range of non-fiction and reference materials. Materials to support investigative approaches to mathematics, science and the foundation subjects are insufficient. Stocks of dictionaries and thesauruses are good in individual classrooms and the recently acquired sets of books for guided reading are well matched to the interests and ability of the pupils.

27. The care and support for pupils is good and often very good. Teachers and learning support assistants are observant and quick to praise. The links with parents and the community are now good. An increasing proportion of parents regularly attend school events; parents appreciate the support and guidance the school provides and seek out senior managers at the beginning and end of the school day.

Leadership and management

28. The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are good. The headteacher has displayed a single-minded determination to improve all aspects of the school. The recently appointed deputy headteacher brings useful experience to complete the balance of the senior management team. The leadership and management of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Subject co-ordinators are developing an understanding of their roles; the most effective lead their areas of responsibility with growing confidence. Three quarters of the staff joined the school in the last year and they have become a hardworking and mutually supportive team.

29. A new chair of governors was appointed in January 2004. The work of the governing body in holding the school to account has improved significantly since the inspection in November 2002. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Financial management and development planning are good. A budget surplus has arisen through good financial control and the help of an LEA transitional grant. Extensive monitoring, evaluation and support by senior managers, governors and the LEA have helped the school move forward. The school's routines, policies and practices are appropriately documented and implemented consistently. Roles and responsibilities, including those for monitoring and reporting, have been redefined following the appointment of the deputy head teacher.

30. The private sector company that provides support services to the LEA has worked effectively with the school on all of the initiatives detailed in the school's action plan. The work of literacy and numeracy consultants has been well received by staff. The headteacher and chair of governors have appreciated the extensive support provided by the school's development adviser and the officer attached to the governing body. There is an appropriately structured plan to monitor and support the school over the next academic year.

Implementation of the action plan

31. The inspection report of 2002 required the school to address five key issues. These principally related to: raising standards; improving leadership and management; securing the school's financial position; monitoring and evaluating the quality of education provided; and developing assessment. In addition, improvements were required in health and safety procedures and the level of pupil attendance. Overall, there has been reasonable progress, and good progress has been made on matters related to leadership and management, financial control and the use of assessment.

32. Well-targeted training for the staff has led to considerable improvements in the quality of teaching. The rapid development of a reliable assessment database has provided the basis for significant improvements in standards. The focus on the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has been particularly beneficial, helped by the extensive support from the LEA. A good programme has been implemented for monitoring classroom practice and providing advice.

33. The school's curriculum is based on national requirements, and schemes of work guide the planning in all subjects. Provision for those pupils who have special educational needs is much improved.

34. The leadership and management of the school are good. The school has delegated more responsibility to the subject co-ordinators and their work is now satisfactory. The senior management group is well balanced and effective.

35. Routines and the organisation of classrooms are thorough. Although the legacy of previously poor progress is apparent in Years 4, 5 and 6, the pupils are making satisfactory progress and the great majority are interested in their work, keen to succeed and well behaved. As a consequence of the school's efforts, the pupils' standards of attainment have risen significantly.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in November 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the school and, in accordance with that Act, the school was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

The school was visited by HMI in June and September 2003, and in January 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of November 2002.

In May 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Eighteen lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and three registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA, in addition, informal discussions were held with other staff and pupils. A wide range of the school's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of November 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.

