



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

BEAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 101202
LEA: BARKING AND DAGENHAM

Inspection Dates: 8 - 10 June 2004
Reporting Inspector: USHA SAHNI HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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INTRODUCTION

The inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Beam Primary School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Key to grades:

Grade 1 Very good

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Adequate

Grade 4 Not adequate

Description of the school

Beam Primary School caters for children between the ages of three and eleven; there are 420 pupils on roll. The school is close to an industrial area and the pupils live close to the school. One in five pupils either does not start school in the reception class or leaves early to complete their schooling elsewhere. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is below that in most primary schools. One in ten is eligible for free school meals, in line with the national average. The school's intake has become more culturally diverse in the past five years. Nearly ten percent of pupils are learning English as an additional language, most of whom have acquired an intermediate level of competence when they join. Pupils start school with positive attitudes and average literacy and numeracy skills.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Effectiveness of the school

This is a good school. All pupils make good progress and show very good attitudes in every area of the curriculum. By the time they leave the school, pupils attain high standards, especially in mathematics. However, some more able pupils are capable of higher standards in English. The headteacher is ably supported by a dedicated and committed leadership team. Together they have created a very caring and positive learning environment which helps every child to thrive. The headteacher recognises the need to set sharp and challenging targets and drive the work of the school so that resources are managed effectively and standards rise further. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has made adequate improvement since the last inspection. Although teaching and learning in information and communication technology (ICT) and music have improved, the school is right to say that the pace of improvement could have been quicker. Similarly progress has been made in assessing pupils' work and in monitoring and evaluating teaching but there is more to be done. Very good progress has been made in improving the attendance of pupils which is now above the national average.

Grade: 3

Capacity to improve

The school believes it is well placed to continue to improve and accurately reflects its work in its self-evaluation statement. Senior staff aspire to high standards for all pupils and are committed to achieving these. The headteacher and governors acknowledge that the pace of change must quicken to secure lasting improvements in all areas of school life.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

To build further on its successes, the school should:

- ensure that resources are clearly focused on school improvement priorities
- implement rigorous systems to monitor the impact of school improvement actions on pupils' learning and on standards
- maintain the focus on raising standards in English, particularly for the more able pupils
- build on the use of assessment in lessons so that teachers do not lose sight of what pupils need to learn to achieve the highest standards.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The school correctly takes pride in the attainment of its pupils who perform well by the time they leave the school. Overall standards in national tests are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 1 and above at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards in mathematics are high but pupils' performance in English is average. The school is aware that some of the more able pupils are not performing well enough in English. The English co-ordinators successfully identified specific weaknesses in pupils' writing skills and have taken steps to address these.

Pupils start school with positive attitudes and average literacy and numeracy skills. The progress of the majority of pupils is generally good in the core subjects and accelerates more rapidly in Year 6 as they approach the national tests. The achievement and progress of pupils with special educational needs are good due to generally well constructed individual educational plans and good quality additional teaching support.

Grade: 2

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Evidence confirms the school's view that it promotes the personal development of its pupils extremely successfully. Pupils are punctual at the beginning of the school day and attendance is good. Pupils enjoy being at school and work productively which contributes to the good progress they make during lessons.

All staff have the highest expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, pupils are very courteous and friendly. Pupils show empathy when, for example, helping children who are new to their class to settle. One pupil described this as 'working as a team to help everyone'. The school is justifiably proud of its record in supporting pupils who have faced difficulties at other schools and are making a fresh start at Beam Primary.

The school actively encourages pupils to think carefully about the nutritional value of the food they eat. The school council runs a 'healthy eating' shop. Pupils buy fruit, savoury biscuits and bottled water. In addition pupils are aware of the need to choose a balanced meal at lunchtimes, and the food provided largely enables them to do this. Pupils enjoy attending a wide variety of after school clubs which promote vigorous physical exercise.

Pupils are aware of different cultures and are given very good opportunities to develop community spirit by, for example, visiting children and senior citizens in a local hospital and raising money for charity on their 'Make a Difference Day'. They are kind and considerate towards each other and conscientiously abide by school rules. Excellent behaviour and very positive attitudes to their learning result in a purposeful atmosphere in lessons.

Grade: 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school believes teaching is a strength. Overall pupils are well taught. This was clear from the lessons observed, the discussions held with pupils and the quality of the work seen. The strongest lessons are underpinned by planning which ensures that the needs of all learners are met and pupils are intellectually challenged. Good questioning by teachers successfully enables pupils of all abilities to actively participate in class discussions. The activities planned are interesting and pupils enjoy their learning. The school could improve

the quality of teaching further by refining planning and day to day assessment so that teachers do not lose sight of the key skills and knowledge pupils need to acquire. At present, senior managers use formal tests and teachers' assessments to set appropriate annual targets for improvement against national curriculum levels. This process is not as yet adequately supported by the identification of key skills and knowledge that pupils need to acquire in order to fulfil their potential. The school recognises that few pupils are aware of these targets or know what they have to do to reach them. As a result, some pupils are not challenged enough as they move through the school and have to work exceedingly hard to catch up in Year 6. No targets are set for different groups.

The curriculum is good overall. It meets statutory requirements including provision for religious education. The school is proud of the provision it makes for the teaching of art. There have been significant recent developments in the provision of ICT. The school is keen to improve pupils' use of ICT skills in order to access information and further their understanding in other subjects. The school meets its aim of providing all pupils with equal access to the full curriculum. English, mathematics and science are taught as separate subjects and good links are made with other subjects to make learning interesting and meaningful. Curriculum policies and schemes of work are in place and the school is currently reviewing these. The school is correct in believing the wide range of activities enrich the curriculum. Pupils and parents value opportunities to take part in sports and residential visits. These enjoyable activities effectively support pupils' physical and social skills.

The school prides itself on the excellent care it provides for pupils. It is correct to do so. There are rigorous child protection procedures which ensure that appropriate agencies intervene speedily to support vulnerable pupils. The school has developed very productive working relationships with agencies such as social services, health workers and local services to ensure specialist support for pupils and their families. Teachers nurture pupils through challenging periods to ensure that they continue to thrive at school. Pupils feel safe and secure at school and say that teachers are 'really kind to us and make us laugh'. The school considers the support it provides for pupils with special educational needs to be a strength. This is true.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school rightly believes that the leadership team drives the positive ethos in the school, where every child matters and the whole staff work together towards the fulfilment of school's aims. There is a strong emphasis on developing very good partnerships with those concerned with children's well being. The staff work conscientiously to ensure that links with other services are effective in removing all obstacles which prevent pupils from learning effectively. The parents are full of praise and admiration for the genuine care and concern shown to pupils by staff. Parents report high levels of satisfaction with the academic and social progress their children make. They feel that the school goes out of its way in helping new pupils to settle well and to help parents become part of the school community.

The leadership team, led by an experienced and reflective headteacher, is confident that it has taken a number of appropriate actions and made progress in ICT and music, both areas identified for improvement in the last two inspections. They have high aspirations for pupils and recognise the need to improve the quality of provision to raise standards further in ICT. The governors have appointed a subject specialist to take this work forward. The subject co-ordinators, many of whom are new to their responsibilities, are becoming increasingly involved in reviewing policies and schemes of work. They provide strong role models as

teachers and successfully disseminate their skills and expertise by working alongside less experienced colleagues to improve the quality of teaching. Except for English and mathematics, the co-ordinators do not play a central role in monitoring the quality of teaching and standards. The headteacher recognises that the monitoring, review and deployment of resources should focus more sharply on raising standards. The school development plan is not precise enough and does not link actions with impact on achievement and learning. These factors slow the pace of improvement and impede the governors' ability to monitor progress. The governors recently reviewed their procedures for budget control and monitoring the work of the school. They are prepared to take the difficult decisions that lie ahead in order to successfully eliminate the current budget deficit, without jeopardizing the good quality provision and high standards.

Grade: 3

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