



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Bemrose Community School

City of Derby Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 13 and 14 October 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

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Contents

Section	Page
Basic information about the school	iv
Introduction	1
Main findings	1
Key issues	3
Inspection findings	4
Standards achieved by the pupils	4
The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	6
The quality of education	7
Leadership and management	9
Implementation of the action plan	9
Appendix – Information about the inspection	11

Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Bemrose Community School
Type of school:	Secondary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Headteacher:	Ms J Ward
Address of school:	Uttoxeter Road Derby Derbyshire DE22 3HU
Telephone:	01332 366711
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mr C Wynn
Local education authority area:	City of Derby
Unique reference number:	112951
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs A M Talboys HMI
Dates of inspection:	13 and 14 October 2004

Introduction

1. Bemrose Community School is situated in Derby. The school is smaller than other secondary schools with 769 pupils on roll. Far more pupils than is typical join the school other than at the normal starting time. Attainment on entry is well below average. Forty per cent of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and this is well above the national average. At 48 per cent, the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is very high. Thirty seven per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, and five per cent of pupils in the school have a Statement of Special Educational Need; these figures are well above the national average.
2. The school was inspected in June 2003. 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 June 2003. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on two occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In October 2004, three 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 June 2003.

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 made rapid improvements in many of the key areas of its work over the past 16 months and has demonstrated a clear capacity to sustain and continue its improvement;
 - the pupils' attainment in Key Stage 3 remains low in comparison with national figures but it is improving. The provisional results in the national tests in 2004 in English show a marked improvement;
 - the results at GCSE level remain low compared to national statistics but they improved in 2004. The proportion of the pupils who achieved five or more good grades increased from 29 per cent in 2003 to 32 per cent in 2004, exceeding the school's published target. This figure is well above the proportion of pupils in schools where prior attainment is similar. The overall statistics, however, mask the attainment levels in the core subjects where the proportion of pupils achieving good grades in 2004 fell in English and science and increased only marginally from a very low level in mathematics;
 - standards are rising, and challenging targets set by the school have been exceeded. The school's system of setting targets is based on the pupils' prior attainment and is sound;
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- the results in the small post-16 provision in 2004 were encouraging with nearly three quarters of the students reaching or exceeding their expected grades;
 - pupils' progress is satisfactory overall. In nearly half the lessons they made good or very good progress. The school effectively monitors the pupils' progress and suitable individual targets are reviewed regularly. The pupils are involved in the process and are well motivated to achieve their targets;
 - the pupils' good attitudes to work promote their progress in many lessons;
 - the pupils' behaviour was good. It was satisfactory or better in all lessons and was good in two thirds. The school has determinedly and successfully improved the pupils' behaviour. The positive ethos which has been engendered has led to a significant reduction in disruption and has been a key factor in improving standards;
 - a suitable range of strategies has successfully been introduced which has improved attendance and punctuality. From the low figure of 87 per cent when the school was inspected in June 2003 the annual attendance rate for last year was in excess of 92 per cent and to date this year is 94.6 per cent;
 - the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is broadly satisfactory with suitable emphasis placed on celebrating the cultural diversity of pupils within the school;
 - the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs is good overall. The teaching assistants provide good support in class;
 - the number of pupils who join the school other than at the normal time is very high and the school has taken appropriate measures to ensure smooth transition into mainstream classes. A new distance-learning programme which provides for many pupils who have recently arrived in the country is an exciting development;
 - the school provides a sufficiently broad curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. The introduction of a range of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 demonstrates a desire to offer an inclusive and appropriate curriculum and to raise attainment;
 - literacy levels remain weak although the school has introduced some good strategies to improve the pupils' skills. Generally, too little emphasis is placed on speaking skills although some good practice was observed in mathematics and humanities;
 - the pupils' numeracy skills remain underdeveloped;
 - some teachers make good use of the information communication technology (ICT) available to them in their teaching and there are some good examples of ICT being used by pupils in lessons and during private study time in the sixth form;
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- the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one lesson; it was good or better in just over half the lessons. Lesson-planning is consistently good and the emphasis on matching the teaching to the expected learning outcomes is a useful aspect of the planning. Most lessons began promptly with a good starter activity which engaged the pupils. They were well structured and the pace was brisk;
- the associate headteacher has led the school effectively. Her uncompromising approach supported the school through a clear agenda for institutional improvement with determination and resourcefulness. The relatively newly appointed headteacher has provided a clear vision for future improvement and has worked hard to establish new avenues of development for the school. The skills of these two most senior staff complement each other and, with the significant strengths of the assistant headteachers, the leadership of the school is emerging as a strong team;
- middle managers have improved their skills significantly and they have engaged in a rigorous programme for monitoring practice within their areas;
- the chair of governors, together with a small core of colleagues, is supportive of the school and is confident to ask searching questions of the senior staff. There remains much work to be undertaken to involve more governors in school development;
- the pupils' involvement in developing and improving the school has been established with a representative group forming the school council. These pupils are proud of the school's improvements and are keen to contribute to further developments.

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;
- continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- continue to develop literacy, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum;
- continue to develop the effectiveness with which leadership and management roles are carried out;
- improve the effectiveness of the governing body.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards of attainment in Key Stage 3 remain low in comparison with national figures but are improving. The provisional results in the national tests in 2004 in English show a marked improvement. If validated, the results exceed the school targets and are well above the average for schools where pupils have similar prior attainment. In mathematics the results have improved and, if validated, indicate a rising trend over the past two years; these results also exceed the school targets and are above the average in schools where pupils have similar prior attainment. In science the results show improvement but failed to meet the school's targets, however, they are comparable to those of pupils with similar prior attainment in other schools.

8. At GCSE, the results remain low compared to national statistics but are also improving. The proportion of the pupils who achieved five or more good grades increased from 29 per cent in 2003 to 32 per cent in 2004 and this exceeded the school's target by two percentage points. This figure is well above the average for schools where there is similar prior attainment. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE passes increased by ten percentage points although it did not reach the school's target. The number of pupils who left the school with no GCSE passes decreased from 18 per cent in 2003 to below 10 per cent in 2004 and while this figure remains high in comparison with national figures it is comparable to that of similar schools.

9. The school's procedures for setting targets for all pupils, based on a comprehensive assessment system for each subject, shows that nearly 90 per cent of the pupils either achieved their target grades or exceeded them. This is an improvement on the 79 per cent in the spring term 2004 and is in line with the targets in the school's action plan. This is an encouraging trend and the school is confident that the appropriately challenging targets set for 2005 will be exceeded.

10. The attainment statistics overall are encouraging and indicate significant improvement, however detailed analysis reveals that there is a considerable difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Only half as many boys as girls achieved five or more good grades at GCSE. Sixteen per cent of the boys left school with no GCSE qualification and this compared to only seven per cent of the girls. In the results of the tests in the core subjects for these pupils in 2002 the results for boys and girls were comparable and the trend through Key Stage 4 shows that the girls' results have improved at a greater rate than the results for the boys.

11. The results in the small post-16 provision were encouraging. Of the eleven students entered for advanced GNVQ courses, six achieved above their target grades, two achieved at their expected levels and only three did not achieve their expected grades. The results for the intermediate and foundation GNVQ courses were variable. Eight students entered for the examinations, all these students had low average points scores at GCSE and six of them achieved pass or merit levels in one or more subjects.

12. While standards in English lessons were below average overall, the pupils made satisfactory progress. The English department has placed considerable emphasis on improving writing and most of the pupils wrote at length despite weak basic skills, often

using writing frames and prompts to structure their responses. In a Year 12 lesson, the pupils showed a good understanding of complex and simple sentence structures which they applied to their written work. The pupils' speaking and listening skills were weak. There were too few opportunities to make sustained oral contributions or to give adequate reasons for their answers. The pupils did not always listen carefully enough to questions and to the information that preceded the question. As a consequence, their answers to questions often relied on guess work. At Key Stage 3, some pupils read fluently but many of the lower-attaining pupils lacked confidence and struggled with unfamiliar words. At Key Stage 4, the pupils responded with interest to texts, commenting on aspects of plot and character, but were much less confident when asked to comment on the effect of language or style. For example, in a Year 10 lesson the pupils worked industriously on poetry by Blake and Wordsworth but did not have the necessary analytical skills to explain their response to a particular part of a poem.

13. The provision for literacy outside of English lessons is good and standards are improving. Teachers routinely introduce and use key words and insist on high standards of presentation in writing. Lesson plans show how literacy skills will be promoted. There is a consistent approach to marking. The pupils are encouraged to write at length and for different purposes in different subjects. Nevertheless, many have difficulties with the basic skills of handwriting, spelling, punctuation and paragraphing.

14. There were insufficient opportunities to develop the pupils' speaking skills, apart from in some lessons in humanities and mathematics. As a consequence, few confidently articulate their ideas and views. Moreover, the pupils were rarely asked to talk in detail about the objectives for learning or to decide on the most appropriate learning strategies.

15. Standards in mathematics lessons were below average overall, although many of the higher-attaining pupils achieved the standard expected for their age. In the higher-attaining Year 11 class, a few of the pupils were working above the age-related expectation. While most Year 11 pupils used scale factors to enlarge shapes, and many were able to do so using a fractional scale factor, a few of the higher-attaining pupils used negative scale factors. In another lesson, however, some pupils struggled when using vectors for simple translations. In Year 9, the pupils had a good understanding of the properties of acute, obtuse and reflex angles. A few solved some simple geometrical problems using angles.

16. The pupils' mathematical communication and reasoning skills were well developed and the emphasis placed on thinking and talking about mathematical concepts was a strong feature of most mathematics lessons. For example, in Year 11 pupils talked in pairs about a question on scale factors and were required to justify their answers to each other as well as to the rest of the class. In Year 9, the pupils identified the information needed to solve a problem and gave reasons why a particular statement was true.

17. The work in the pupils' books was generally presented well and was rarely left incomplete. The positive relationships that exist between the teachers and the pupils generated a positive ethos for learning; consequently, the pupils were keen to do well. Overall, the pupils made suitable progress at both key stages and in the well-taught lessons the pupils' progress was good.

18. The pupils' numerical skills are better than they were at the time of the previous inspection although this remains a key area for development. Numeracy was taught

effectively in mathematics lessons, and overall, there was a suitable emphasis on developing the pupils' use and application of number. Numeracy is less well established in other lessons and there were few examples of numeracy being developed in other subjects. However, the recent audit of numeracy across the curriculum, and the action being taken as a result, has laid a solid foundation for future improvement.

19. Standards in science were generally below average. However, the lessons were pitched at a suitable level of challenge and pupils made satisfactory progress. Appropriate emphasis is placed upon the development of the pupils' skills of scientific enquiry and the pupils undertake practical activities sensibly and with proper regard to health and safety procedures. Pupils in a lower-ability set in Year 11 studied oxidation and reduction and they skilfully set up intricate equipment to investigate the reduction of copper oxide. They were confident in their prediction of the outcome of the experiment and were able to draw appropriate conclusions. Pupils in Year 7 set up an investigation into the purity of water to predict the results of tests. They showed appropriate considerations for the design of fair tests. The pupils made good progress in a theory lesson in Year 10 on organic chemistry, they worked together in pairs using laptop computers confidently. They calculated the formulae of individual alkanes and alkenes and were able to extrapolate their results into a general formula for the series.

20. The work in exercise books shows a good use of scientific language but low levels of basic literacy. The work is set out well and the pupils' progress is supported by helpful comments in the teacher's marking. There were few opportunities for the pupils to develop their speaking skills; in one lesson the pupils successfully plotted the evolution of a star system with the use of a sequence of information cards, but the opportunity for the pupils to explain their sequences to others was missed. Questioning in lessons rarely allowed the pupils to provide responses in full sentences or to develop their ideas orally.

21. Standards in ICT lessons were below the expected level for a significant proportion of the pupils. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the pupils demonstrated a secure understanding of the rules and conventions of desk-top publishing but did not evaluate the effect of modifications to presentation. Nevertheless, progress is good. For example, the work of the most-able pupils in Year 13 thoroughly evaluated the effectiveness of features of internet sites.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. The pupils' good attitudes to work promote their progress in many lessons. The school council is a representative group of pupils from each class in the school and members expressed clear and positive attitudes to their work and high expectations of the standards of teaching and support. The older pupils were unambiguous in their reporting of improvements in the school. They articulated the positive effect that these improvements have had on the attitudes and behaviour of the majority of the pupils and the consequent improvement in attainment.

23. The pupils' behaviour in lessons was generally good. It was satisfactory or better in all lessons and was good in two thirds. Where the behaviour was very good the pupils were attentive, interested and engaged and they listened carefully to instructions. There was good collaborative work in many subjects and the pupils responded positively to well-established classroom routines and to clear praise and sanctions. In lessons where the behaviour was

generally satisfactory there were some lapses of concentration and the pupils' response to work set was often compliant rather than enthusiastic.

24. The school has determinedly and successfully improved the pupils' behaviour. The positive ethos which has been engendered has led to a significant reduction in disruption and has been a key factor in improving standards and achievement.

25. Behaviour around the school was generally satisfactory. The majority of the pupils were courteous and friendly to visitors. Movement on the corridors has improved and the "keep to the left" rule is more consistently applied. Some unsatisfactory behaviour on the corridors remains. The discourteous and unruly behaviour of small groups of mostly boys sometimes went unchallenged by staff.

26. The pupils' attendance is good. In 2003-4, the rate of attendance was 92.4 per cent. This is a significant improvement on 2002-3, when the figure stood at only 87.3 per cent, and is well above the national median. The rate of unauthorised absence was 1.6 per cent in 2003-04, compared to 4.9 per cent in 2002-3. The school has very effective systems for monitoring the pupils' attendance and for challenging any absence. Since the start of this term, attendance has been 94.6 per cent.

27. Punctuality improved during 2003-4. The average number of pupils late to lessons each week fell from 80 to 40. This improvement has been sustained since the start of the autumn term of 2004-5.

28. The pupils' personal development, including social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, is satisfactory overall. Spiritual development is good. It is fostered through a range of activities in lessons, in assemblies and after-school activities. In a Year 7 religious education lesson, the pupils were encouraged to reflect on the idea of an eternal being and took part in a thoughtful recital of a sacred Sikh poem. In a history lesson in Year 8, the pupils showed good understanding of historical bias and thought about their own lives compared with the lives of people from the past. In another Year 8 history lesson, a pupil spoke eloquently about the causes of the English civil war which provoked a thoughtful response from another pupil. In these lessons, the pupils listened sensitively and carefully to explanations of different customs and beliefs.

29. Attractive displays around the school promote achievement and celebrate success. Many reflect the cultural diversity of the school and others ask thought-provoking questions of the pupils. One eye-catching display in a main corridor exhorted the pupils to 'make a difference'; another illustrated how tessellating patterns are used in Islamic art; and a third celebrated the 43 languages spoken by different members of the school community.

The quality of education

30. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one lesson; it was good or better in just over half the lessons. Planning was consistently good across the school and the emphasis on matching the teaching to the expected learning outcomes was a useful aspect of the planning. Most lessons started promptly with a good starter activity which engaged the pupils and were brought to a disciplined close with a useful summing up activity. They were well structured and the pace was brisk.

31. In the very good lessons, teachers were knowledgeable and showed real enthusiasm for their subject. A variety of activities sustained the pupils' interest and good questioning reinforced learning. Appropriate plans for groups of pupils with specific needs were used extensively and the work was well matched to the pupils' abilities.
32. In satisfactory lessons there were strengths and weaknesses. Classroom routines were well established, plans were good and the teacher's subject knowledge was generally sound. However, the pupils were sometimes passive for too long and the lessons lacked opportunities for the pupils to think for themselves.
33. In the one unsatisfactory lesson the relatively inexperienced teacher did not provide adequate challenge for the pupils and the questioning was at a superficial level. The pupils enjoyed the lesson and produced the required work but their knowledge and skills were not extended.
34. The quality of teaching in the small sixth form was consistently good. The students were encouraged to work collaboratively and good questioning reinforced and tested understanding.
35. The school's marking policy was consistently applied and there were good examples of the pupils finding the comments in their exercise books a useful aid to improvement. The setting and marking of homework remains inconsistent although the recording of homework set in the pupils' planners has improved.
36. The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs was good overall. All staff had copies of the pupils' individual educational plans which contained suitably specific targets for the pupils and useful strategies for the teachers. The information was used by most teachers when planning lessons although there were some lessons where the pupils' needs were not met effectively. The school has a range of achievement data about the pupils who have special educational needs which shows that most pupils make at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress.
37. The teaching assistants provide good support in class. They have received relevant training and are more informed and involved in the life of the school generally. The teaching of those pupils withdrawn for support ranged from satisfactory to very good.
38. The school has a secure and consistent system to identify the pupils' levels of attainment in different subjects. Individual targets are set regularly and progress is monitored. Half-termly tests, which correlate with National Curriculum levels, provide valuable assessment information for teachers, pupils and parents. The pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and what they need to do to improve. Accessible 'catch-up packs' in all subjects have been developed to assist those pupils who are not meeting their targets, who have been absent or are new to the school.
39. The number of pupils who join the school other than at the normal time is very high and the school has taken appropriate measures to ensure smooth transition into mainstream classes. A new distance-learning programme which provides for many pupils who have recently arrived in the country is an exciting development.
40. The school provides a sufficiently broad curriculum to meet the pupils' needs. The introduction of a range of vocational courses in Key Stage 4 demonstrates a desire to offer an
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inclusive and appropriate curriculum and to raise attainment. Key Stage 3 consultants from the local education authority (LEA) have provided good support for the school which has led to appropriate development in the core subjects and in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Leadership and management

41. The associate headteacher has led the school effectively. Her uncompromising approach supported the school through a clear agenda for institutional improvement with determination and resourcefulness. The relatively newly appointed headteacher has provided a clear vision for future improvement and has worked hard to establish new avenues of development for the school. The skills of these two most senior staff complement each other and with the significant strengths of the assistant headteachers the leadership of the school is emerging as a strong team.

42. Middle managers have improved their skills significantly and have engaged in a rigorous programme for monitoring practice within their areas.

43. The school has well-structured monitoring procedures. Senior line managers and middle managers meet each month with a common format to ensure consistency. Action points are agreed that place clear responsibility to instigate improvements. These systems are now well in place and middle managers feel a corporate responsibility to ensure deadlines are met. Exam reviews are rigorous and identify an action plan for improvement. For subjects which significantly missed their targets in 2004 rigorous monitoring is in place together with a series of strategies to support improvement. However, it is of some concern that last year's monitoring did not anticipate the significant shortfall in English and mathematics.

44. The chair of governors, together with a small core of colleagues, is supportive of the school and is confident to ask searching questions of the senior staff. An appropriate committee structure has been developed and the chair of governors is working hard to establish effective leaders of these groups. There remains much work to be undertaken to involve more governors in school development.

45. A suitable plan for the school's continued improvement is in draft form. In addition to the development of the current programmes of action there are exciting plans to enhance provision by the use of external and virtual learning opportunities for the pupils and a greater emphasis on working within the wider Bemrose community. In addition there are sensible plans to enhance the performing arts area of the school's curriculum in order to improve the pupils' self esteem and speaking skills.

Implementation of the action plan

46. The inspection report of June 2003 required the school to address five key issues. These principally related to: raising attainment, effectively implementing the Key Stage 3 strategy, improving teaching and learning, securing effective accountability at all levels and improving attendance and punctuality.

47. Reasonable progress has been made on improving attainment. The school has worked hard to secure the consistent use of systems to identify the pupils' levels of attainment across the curriculum. The effective target-setting process which involves the pupils in their

own reviews is working well. However, significant improvement in the overall attainment statistics masks insufficient progress in some areas most notably the core subjects at GCSE and there is much work still to do.

48. Good progress has been made on the implementation of the national strategy for Key Stage 3 and this now well established well. A strategy manager was appointed in 2003 and she has led the development of literacy across the school. A programme of training has been provided for the teachers, and each term the school has identified a particular literacy or numeracy focus. Until recently, the main thrust of these developments has been on improving literacy although the school has now turned its attention to improving numeracy. The other strands of the strategy have been introduced successfully.

49. Good progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is less unsatisfactory teaching and more teaching that is good or very good. A comprehensive monitoring system swiftly identified the areas of unsatisfactory teaching and appropriate actions were taken. All teachers assess their own effectiveness and heads of area regularly monitor teaching, planning and assessment. The senior managers continue to minimise disruption caused through staff absence through their firm implementation of the LEA's policy for managing absence.

50. Good progress has been made in holding the middle managers to account and the leadership of the associate headteacher has been very good. The headteacher has made a promising start and the part played by governors continues to develop. Overall, reasonable progress has been made on this key issue.

51. The pupils' rate of attendance has risen significantly since the previous inspection. Good links have been established between the senior manager responsible for improving attendance, the external agencies, the pastoral managers, and the school's attendance officer. Good attendance is promoted through a suitable range of rewards, and parents and pupils are regularly reminded of the relationship between attendance and achievement.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected by HMI in June 2003 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 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 February and May 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of June 2003.

In October 2004, three HMI returned to inspect the school for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Thirty five lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and two registration sessions were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the associate headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors and the school council. 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 June 2003 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.