



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report
Bentley High Street Primary School

Doncaster Education Authority

Dates of inspection: 17 and 18 November 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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Basic information about the school

Name of school:	Bentley High Street Primary School
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Headteacher:	Mr P R Davis
Address of school:	High Street Bentley Doncaster DN5 0AA
Telephone:	01302 874536
Name and address of appropriate authority:	The governing body, address as above
Chair of governors:	Mrs A Saunders
Local education authority area:	Doncaster
Unique reference number:	106752
Name of reporting inspector:	Mrs S Øyen HMI
Dates of inspection:	17 and 18 November 2004

Introduction

1. Bentley High Street Primary School is situated in Bentley, a few miles to the north of Doncaster. The school is larger than average with 276 pupils on roll. The number of pupils coming into the reception year has fallen in recent years and two of the 11 classes have pupils from two year groups. Thirty seven nursery pupils attend either the morning or the afternoon session. In addition, up to nine children attend the nursery funded by Sure Start, which currently shares the accommodation. When the pupils start in the nursery, their attainment is generally at or slightly below that expected for their age. Most of the pupils are of British white heritage and are from a range of social and economic backgrounds. Eighteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is similar to the national average. One pupil in school and two in the nursery have English as an additional language and receive support in learning to speak English. Fifteen per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and three pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school is working with Old Hall, a Pupil Referral Unit, to ensure the continuing inclusion of three pupils back into mainstream education.

2. The school was inspected in December 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 December 2002. The school was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.

4. In November 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 December 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 is a vibrant, warm community. There is a 'buzz' in lessons and the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils are working together to meet the school's motto of 'simply the best'. The school has achieved much, particularly of late, and is in a strong position to continue to improve;
- standards are rising, most so at Key Stage 2, because much strong teaching is helping the pupils to achieve well. In 2004, the school's results in the national Key Stage 2 tests in mathematics and science were the best yet and brought the school up to the national average. The good performance of a significant number of pupils also lifted the standard at Key Stage 1. Standards in reading and writing, however, are too low throughout the school. Many pupils are slow to read fluently, to spell accurately and to punctuate their writing correctly. They underachieve across the curriculum;

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- the pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved markedly and are now very good overall. The pupils have responded positively to the teachers' higher expectations of them to give of their best. Their enthusiasm for learning has grown as lessons have become more interesting. They try hard, work and play well together and are proud of their achievements;
 - the quality of teaching and learning is good although there are weaknesses in English. Changes in staffing have strengthened teaching expertise, especially at Key Stage 2. The teaching and support staff are very committed to the school and good teamwork is an increasing strength. The classrooms were bright and carefully organised to support the pupils' learning. There were many instances of flair in the activities and in the eye-catching displays in rooms and corridors that showed the pupils' work to best effect. The teachers planned and prepared their lessons conscientiously. Clear, step-by-step teaching enabled all the pupils to progress in most lessons although, in a few, the pupils failed to grasp how the content linked with what they already knew;
 - the increased emphasis on learning through first-hand experience has enriched and enlivened the curriculum which is now good in all key stages. For every class, visitors and visits to places of interest are an integral part of topics which often cross several subjects. The pupils have good opportunities to take part in sports and musical activities;
 - the good provision for the pupils' personal development includes a well structured programme of personal, social and health education. A strong focus on good manners, respect for others and doing what is right pervades school life. The pupils know how well they are doing and the school celebrates their successes;
 - the school has developed effective systems to track the pupils' progress and to plan how best to meet individuals' needs, especially those pupils who have special educational needs. The support staff play a key role in helping these pupils to play a full part in school life and to make personal progress;
 - the school is extremely well led and managed. The headteacher, appointed in January 2003, has been inspirational and highly influential in getting the school back on track. He has shown integrity, pragmatism and quiet determination in gaining the best for the pupils and the staff in the face of significant difficulties, not least finance. His open-door approach and readiness to listen have rekindled and strengthened the support of parents;
 - the governors, senior and middle managers have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. All have taken a huge step forward in their ability and willingness to identify what they need to do to raise standards. Although there is a comprehensive plan of action for the current year, there is little to indicate the governors' plans in the longer term;
 - the local education authority (LEA) has given good support in resolving issues related to staffing and professional development, as well as the refurbishment of the school.
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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 across the curriculum but particularly in reading and writing;
- strengthen the quality of teaching and learning;
- develop further the skills and expertise of senior and middle managers in leading programmes of improvement;
- compile a development plan for the school in the longer term.

Inspection findings

Standards achieved by the pupils

7. Standards are rising, most so at Key Stage 2, where strong teaching is helping the pupils to make good progress. However, standards are not consistent and the picture is complex. At Key Stage 1, standards are below average but at Key Stage 2 they are satisfactory overall although there are classes where standards are low. In the last few years, not all the pupils have made the progress they should because of weaknesses in the teaching. This has left a legacy of underachievement, especially in Year 4.

8. In the 2004 national tests, the school's overall results were better than in 2003. At Key Stage 1 this reversed the downward trend of the last two years although the results were still below the average of similar schools in mathematics and science and well below in English. Nevertheless, the standard rose in all three subjects at both key stages because there was an increase in the proportion of pupils who performed well for their age. This was especially marked in mathematics and science at Key Stage 2, where the results were the best yet. The school exceeded its targets and national figures. This was a good achievement for the school.

9. At both key stages, however, there was a significant proportion of pupils who did not attain the level expected for their age. This was most marked in reading and writing. Too many Year 2 pupils have moved into Year 3 lacking basic skills in reading, and more so in writing. In the national tests, relatively few pupils achieved well for their age in reading but there was a good rise in the proportion of higher attainment in writing. Forty three per cent of pupils attained Level 2A and 17 per cent attained Level 3, the higher standards for Year 2 pupils, compared with 16 and five in 2003. Conversely, very few Year 6 pupils did well in writing in the national tests and they failed to reach the potential shown in work in class.

10. In the nursery and reception years, the pupils make steady, often good, progress in all the six required areas of learning but especially in personal and social development. By the end of the reception year, most are working at or close to the standard expected for their age. Some are quick to show an interest in letters, words and numbers, but a significant proportion are slow to move into reading and writing. This runs over into Key Stage 1. Last year, discontinuities in teaching limited the pupils' progress, especially for some pupils in Year 2.

11. The school is again placing a high focus on raising standards in English. Gaps in the teachers' knowledge continue to limit the pupils' progress but there are signs of some improvements. The pupils took care with their handwriting and presented neat work. Similarly, many pupils have gained high marks in spelling tests this term. However, in all year groups, the pupils' work was peppered with incorrect spellings and a frequent absence of basic punctuation of sentences. This undermined the often good quality of the pupils' ideas and the content of their oral work. In reading, too many pupils are slow to read fluently and to appreciate aspects of style. These weak spots have a negative impact on the pupils' reading and writing as part of their work in other subjects.

12. In lessons in mathematics, most pupils were working at the level expected for their age. The teachers' use of national plans has given a clear focus to lessons and raised expectations. A significant proportion of pupils in the previous Year 6 made good gains, with several progressing from below average attainment in Year 2 to above average attainment by the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, too many pupils in all year groups were hesitant about basic number facts and, at Key Stage 2, often struggled to recall multiplication tables.

13. Standards in science are generally satisfactory. The increased emphasis on the process of scientific investigation is beginning to show in the pupils' skills and knowledge. The nursery pupils were encouraged to use magnifying glasses to look at tea bags and to observe what happened when the bags were placed in water. Pupils in Year 6 showed an awareness of the factors to consider in conducting a fair test over time and others in Years 3 and 4 had used the computer to produce graphs of the findings from their investigations.

14. The use of information and communication technology as part of work across the curriculum has improved but remains patchy. Portraits by pupils in Year 4 included some computer work that involved skilful control of the mouse. The pupils develop skills appropriate to their age in lessons in the computer suite but in some classes they have limited opportunities to apply them.

15. Many pupils now reach a good standard for their age in art, music and sport. Observational drawings of plants showed attention to detail; there were some good pieces of work in the style of other artists, and pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked hard to produce clay maquettes emulating sculptures they had seen.

The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved markedly and are now very good overall. The pupils enjoy school and feel at ease there. The nursery pupils had settled quickly into the routines. They confidently and happily chose their activities and later described to others what they had done. Their willing participation was also evident in other classes.

17. Throughout the school, but especially at Key Stage 2, the pupils have grown enthusiastic and eager to learn as the teachers have expected more of them, and as the lessons have become more interesting. The pupils were keen to win praise and rewards for their attitude and effort. They were justifiably proud to have their work chosen as 'work of the week' or on display around the school. The pupils were highly responsive in all lessons; they tried hard and persevered, even when they were unsure of what to do, and generally took care to present their work neatly.

18. The pupils behaved very well in and around school. They followed the rules although some gave in to the temptation to run in the long corridors. In lessons, the boys and girls got on well together. They cooperated productively when working in groups; they agreed responsibilities, discussed ideas and helped one another sensibly. For their age, pupils in Year 4 showed outstanding respect for and consideration of others' opinions when reflecting on aspects of friendship.

19. The school's provision for the pupils' personal development is good, with particular strengths in the moral and social aspects. There are warm relationships at all levels and the headteacher sets the tone in his expectations of the staff and the pupils to respect others, show good manners and do what is right. As a result, incidents of unacceptable behaviour are infrequent. The adults were positive, firm and fair in their dealings with pupils who very occasionally stepped out of line. The reintegration of three pupils into mainstream education is being handled sensitively and effectively.

20. The staff show great care and thought in the displays to celebrate the pupils' achievements. The quality of display is consistently high throughout the school and adds much to the overall ethos. A good example was the collection of paintings and writing entitled 'Reflections on Water'. In many cases, the addition of carefully chosen objects and drapes added to the impact. However, the school has not built on this enough to foster the pupils' skills of reflection and also their understanding of differing values, particularly of other cultures.

21. Attendance has improved slightly but is still below the national average. A significant proportion of absence is due to family holidays in term time.

The quality of education

22. The overall quality of education has improved significantly and is now good. Changes in staffing, the willingness of teaching and support staff to act on advice and the widening of the curriculum have enhanced the pupils' learning.

23. The quality of teaching is good. It was very good in four lessons, good in a further four, satisfactory in 14 and unsatisfactory in one. From being judged to be unsatisfactory in 2002, the teaching at Key Stage 2 is now a growing strength of the school. All the very good teaching was in this key stage. There is potential for the teaching to be even stronger. Just as there were several satisfactory lessons in all three key stages on the cusp of being good, there were some good lessons with very good elements. Nevertheless, inconsistencies across the curriculum and between classes, most notably in the teaching of English, slow the pupils' progress, especially in Key Stages 1 and 2.

24. In all key stages, but especially at Key Stage 2, there has been a marked shift to lively, purposeful teaching that builds on the pupils' willingness to learn. Touches of flair have become more prevalent as the teachers have gained in confidence and depth of subject knowledge. The teachers made good use of interactive whiteboards and other resources, including small whiteboards and number fans, to involve all the pupils in question-and-answer sessions. In a very good mathematics lesson, the teacher constantly reviewed and reinforced the Year 5 pupils' knowledge of shapes and angles through a range of activities. New information was subtly introduced and quickly learnt because of the teacher's clear explanations and explicit links to what the pupils already knew. Frequent challenges, praise and touches of shared humour held the pupils' interest. Such effective elements were also

present in other lessons throughout the school. Occasionally, the teachers' explanations were too abstruse for the pupils to grasp fully new information or to realise what they had to do. The teachers skirted over key points and missed chances to reinforce the pupils' learning.

25. All the teachers had prepared their lessons thoroughly and often had amended their plans in the light of the pupils' responses in previous lessons. The support staff knew the purpose and content of lessons and often took a lead role in working with groups. The effectiveness of teamwork has improved significantly. In the Foundation Stage, for example, the pupils benefited from the adults' skills in fostering social interaction and their creativity in setting up activities indoors and out, such as Percy the Park-keeper's shop. The staff's good understanding of early years education helped them to foster the pupils' ability to plan and review what they had done. Across the school, the support staff had used their talents well to prepare resources and to display the pupils' work. The classrooms were bright and well organised to support the pupils' learning, with a high focus on key vocabulary. The teachers shared the space between classrooms but there is some way to go to make it an integral learning area. There was a productive 'buzz' in lessons; the pupils knew the teachers expected them to work hard and to do their best. Their targets in English and mathematics were prominently displayed and there were good examples of marking that highlighted what the pupils had done well and how to improve.

26. The involvement of parents, work with teachers from the secondary school, visitors and visits, including overnight stays, have become regular occurrences as part of topics that link several subjects. Along with a strengthening focus on practical experiences, the arts and sport, this has enriched and enlivened the curriculum in and out of school time. There is a good range of extra activities, including gardening, and the formation of the 'big band', led by the headteacher, brings together those pupils learning to play musical instruments.

27. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs has improved and is now good. The pupils' individual education plans identified realistic targets and the small steps in learning needed to ensure the pupils' success in achieving them. The adults knew the pupils well and gave effective one-to-one and group support. However, there were only a few lessons when the staff provided additional resources to allow the pupils to manage their tasks with minimal adult support. The school has introduced individual behaviour programmes for a few pupils. It has also started to identify those pupils who would benefit from a boost to catch up on their learning or who need an extra challenge, and several members of support staff have been trained to lead related programmes.

28. The school has gradually developed effective systems to track the pupils' progress and, for the first time, has the data it needs to make informed decisions about teaching, setting targets and ensuring the curriculum meets the pupils' needs.

Leadership and management

29. The quality of leadership and management is good. It has strengthened significantly at all levels and that of the headteacher is extremely good. Senior managers have developed expertise and acumen in leading programmes of improvement, particularly in monitoring practice and evaluating its impact. Although there are inconsistencies in the quality of subject leadership, the school is well placed to build on what has already been achieved.

30. Since taking up the post in January 2003, the headteacher has been inspirational and highly influential in getting the school back on track. Governors, staff and parents comment

that he brought 'a breath of fresh air' when morale was low. He has been very successful in bringing the staff together and establishing efficient systems to manage the work of the school. His integrity, positive outlook and pragmatic attitude stood him in good stead in dealing systematically with staffing issues, as well as an unexpected financial deficit and many gaps in statutory procedures, while gaining the support of the LEA to refurbish and redecorate the school. His everyday meetings with parents in the playground at the start and end of school, along with his readiness to listen, have been crucial to the renewed support from parents. As a result, the school has taken on a new lease of life and raised its profile in the community. The pace of improvement has gained momentum and the school has gradually taken on a culture of high expectations. It is starting to meet its motto of 'simply the best'.

31. The quality of governance has also strengthened, particularly in the way the governors hold the headteacher and other managers to account. The chair of the governing body knows the school well from her regular visits and help in classes. The headteacher's forthright reports have ensured that she and the governing body have been kept fully informed about the school's progress in carrying out the action plan and the problems it has faced. The governors, guided by the headteacher, made prudent decisions in appointing experienced and newly qualified staff to fill teaching and management vacancies. The school has benefited from their enthusiasm and knowledge of effective practices at other schools.

32. The governing body has rightly considered the organisational and financial implications of the reduction in the numbers of pupils on roll, and also the pressing need for it to agree a plan with the LEA to reduce the deficit in funds. The headteacher has been highly effective in tapping additional funding and in generating income through links with other agencies which use part of the school's surplus accommodation. The current development plan sets out a very clear agenda for the year ahead. Although the headteacher and the governing body have a vision for the next few years, there is no long-term plan to indicate how this will be put into action.

33. The LEA has provided good support, especially in resolving issues related to staffing and the development of management expertise. The school has particularly benefited from the secondment of a curriculum innovations consultant who was appointed to the position of deputy headteacher from April 2004. The responsive tailoring of support to the school's needs, particularly in developing assessment systems and management skills, has been a key factor in the increased pace of progress in 2004.

Implementation of the action plan

34. The inspection report of December 2002 required the school to address five key issues. These related to: improving the quality of leadership and management; improving the quality of teaching in the junior classes; establishing a whole-school approach to curriculum planning and assessment; establishing rigorous procedures to ensure pupils of all abilities are provided for effectively; and strengthening links with parents. The school got off to a slow start in making improvements. However, the steady implementation of the detailed action plan led to good strides in progress, especially in the quality of the leadership and management and the links with parents.

35. The work and impact of the senior and middle managers has improved markedly. All are now aware of their roles and responsibilities and are willing to take the initiative in carrying out programmes of improvement.

36. The teachers have acted on advice and improved the quality and consistency of their teaching. Monitoring by key school staff and personnel from the LEA has given the teachers a clear picture of how to improve their teaching. This has benefited all the teachers but especially those at Key Stage 2, where changes in staffing have also added expertise and raised expectations with a consequent rise in standards at the end of Year 6.

37. The curriculum is now coherent and structured. The school is implementing some of the principles of the National Primary Strategy, especially in relation to linking subjects.

38. The school has developed reliable systems to assess the pupils' attainment and to track their progress. It has shifted from forecasts to setting targets and using assessment for learning. The conscientious work of the co-ordinator for special educational needs has strengthened the quality of the provision for pupils who have special needs. The school has worked with other agencies to challenge the gifted and talented pupils.

39. The headteacher's open approach, in addition to the introduction of regular newsletters, information boards, school website, workshops and breakfast club, has renewed the school's links with parents. Questionnaire returns indicate the parents' now strong support for what the school does.

Appendix – Information about the inspection

The school was inspected in December 2002 under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors. 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 May and November 2003, and in January and June 2004 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of December 2002.

In November 2004, two HMI returned to inspect the school for two days to check the progress being made. 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.

Twenty three lessons or parts of lessons, two school assemblies 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 chair of the governing body and senior staff. 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 December 2002 and the action plan prepared by the governing body to address those key issues.