



Beecroft Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109445
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278197
Inspection dates 3 October 2005 to 4 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Joyce Cox LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Type of school | First | School address | Westfield Road |
| School category | Community | | LU6 1DW |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 9 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01582663486 |
| Number on roll | 206 | Fax number | 01582673094 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr. Steve Cantelow |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable | Headteacher | Mrs. Rebecca Baker |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Beecroft Lower School takes children from the age of four until the end of Year 4. It is an average sized First School situated in the middle of a large social housing estate in Dunstable. Over a quarter of the pupils are eligible for free school meals; this is above average. On entering the school children generally have skills which are below those expected for children of their age. More pupils have learning or physical difficulties than is usual in most schools. More pupils than usual do not have English as their first language and a small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The main other languages spoken are Italian, Polish and Hindi. The school has a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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|---------|--------------|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Beecroft Lower School is a good school. Inspectors support the school's positive assessment of its overall effectiveness. The school provides good value for money, good quality of education and is well led by the headteacher. Parents are very satisfied with the school. Standards are broadly in line with those expected and this reflects the good progress pupils make from when they start school. Standards are rising at the end of Year 2, particularly in mathematics and reading, as a result of successful actions taken by the school. Writing standards are progressing more slowly and improving all pupils' writing skills is a key priority. Due to staffing difficulties the upward trend in standards at the end of Year 4 was temporarily halted in 2005 but is back on track this year. Pupils are well cared for, including those with social, learning or physical difficulties or those from other cultural or ethnic backgrounds. The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' progress and their attitudes towards school. Some teaching assistants could be more involved in raising pupils' attainment and achievement. Teachers' marking does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work. The curriculum is good and the school provides a wide range of exciting activities to enhance its provision. The learning provided for children in the Foundation Stage is a major strength and children get off to a flying start in their school life. They enjoy a skilfully planned variety of enticing activities, including daily opportunities to work and play in the safe enclosed outdoor area. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The issues raised have been addressed effectively. The school is clearly able to improve further in the future and to become even more successful in raising pupils' standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to work to raise standards in writing throughout the school. - Ensure that the dip in standards at the end of Year 4 in 2005 is reversed. - Involve all support staff in Years 3 and 4 fully in planning work and recording pupils' progress. - Make sure that teachers' marking clearly tells older pupils how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's analysis that most pupils make good progress. Children start at the school at an early stage of learning and have much ground to make up. In particular, there are weaknesses in their communication, language and literacy skills. They make very good progress in the reception unit because the teaching and curriculum are outstanding. By the time they start in Year 1 the majority have reached the expected levels. The progress of the pupils in Years 1 and 2 continues to be good and pupils achieve well. Pupils make steady progress in writing and the school continues to seek ways to improve all pupils' writing skills. In 2004 the Year 4 pupils achieved particularly well in reading, writing and mathematics and the school's records clearly show that they had made very good progress since they were in Year 2. In 2005

there was a dip in standards in Year 4 due to staffing difficulties. This situation has been rectified and pupils are on course to attain higher standards in the end of year tests. Pupils at an early stage of learning English and those from minority ethnic groups are well supported and their progress is good. This is also true in the case of those with learning difficulties and those in local authority care.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. They like school, enjoy lessons and behave very well. Attendance is satisfactory and rising. Pupils support and care about each other, as was shown in an assembly about teamwork. They feel safe in school and free from bullying. Some pupils have the role of being playground friends and other pupils like knowing they are there to help them if they have a problem or feel lonely. These pupils also organise exciting play activities for wet breaks. This is one of several good schemes which give pupils the chance to develop relationships and skills for life. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are given healthy heart stickers when they choose healthy food at lunchtime. The way pupils are helped learn the basic skills and the opportunities for working together provide a good preparation for their future learning and life beyond school. Their religious, social, moral and cultural development is good. In particular the headteacher's 'Bee Longing Basket' has helped extend the knowledge and understanding of the pupils about other religions and life-styles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good. This is one of the key reasons for the pupils' achieving well. Pupils talk enthusiastically about how their teachers make learning 'fun and enjoyable' and how much they enjoy 'learning new things.' The high quality relationships, effective classroom management skills and teachers' enthusiasm help the pupils to succeed. Teaching is often lively and animated and grabs and maintains the interest of the pupils. This is particularly true in the Foundation Stage, where staff work tirelessly to help bring children's learning to life. There is normally a buzz of excitement as children take part happily and enthusiastically in an enticing range of imaginative tasks. All teachers use a wide range of techniques to meet pupils' different learning needs. Teaching assistants in Years 3 and 4 are not fully involved with planning and recording pupils' progress. Good, robust procedures are in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. The information is used well to identify pupils who are not doing as well as expected or who are doing better than expected. Good attention is paid to comparing how well all pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is not English, are doing. A careful check ensures that the less and more able pupils make the expected

progress. The marking of older pupils' work requires improvement so that they know exactly what they do well and what they have to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. A successful physical education partnership has been formed with a middle and upper school, which is developing pupils' physical skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision has been improved and all pupils enjoy regular lessons in the ICT suite and good opportunities to use their ICT skills in other subjects. Interactive whiteboards are used well to help make learning more exciting. Pupils enjoy their lessons and especially like the new arrangement where, instead of having one lesson a week in subjects such as history, geography and religious education, they have one of these subjects for a full week. The school offers a large and varied choice of activities to extend pupils' learning, including sport, drawing, and cross-stitch. The gardening club in conjunction with a community project has skilfully transformed a disused area. There are also chances for them to make decisions and act responsibly as school council representatives. Fairy-tale days, Viking and pirate days and an art gallery project are excellent examples of how the school has helped to bring learning alive for all pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for all its pupils and is always ready to recognise and celebrate their individuality and to make sure they are safe in school. Children say that there is always someone to turn to if they have any worries or concerns. Child protection arrangements are thorough and all staff are trained. The school works closely with parents to encourage pupils' learning. For instance, some parents have made exciting resources, including story sacks which encourage pupils to learn. The 'Rainbow group' has made a considerable difference to children who have suffered loss, and given them security and support. Reception children settle very quickly and happily into school because of the excellent provision and support offered by the Unit staff. Pupils with medical and extra learning needs are helped by good links with other organisations so that they can take a full and active part in all the activities the school offers. Individual learning plans match the needs of pupils and help them to make progress. Teaching assistants do not always ensure that they record the work of pupils so that all staff know the stage of learning the pupil has reached and what the pupil needs to learn next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is charismatic and dynamic and has worked extremely hard to improve provision in some significant aspects. She has succeeded in putting successful strategies in place which raised standards in reading

and mathematics in the 2005 Year 2 national tests. She has introduced a highly effective system to evaluate the school's work and to follow pupils' progress. The headteacher has also raised staff morale after a difficult time and instigated considerable building improvement to create an exciting and stimulating environment both inside and outside. Together with the senior management team the headteacher has created a happy ethos where all staff work together very well. All pupils are treated equally. The parents' views are overwhelmingly positive and all of them think the school is well led and managed. The school is good at evaluating what it does and knows what it needs to do to improve. The school improvement planning, which the governors carefully monitor, is correctly focused on improving weaknesses and maintaining strengths. Subject leaders have improved their roles since the last inspection by developing ways in which they look at and improve teaching and learning in their subjects. Governance is effective. Governors are committed to the school and very aware of its strengths and weaknesses. They keep a watchful eye on the budget, always ensuring that they obtain good value in their spending.

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Inspection judgements

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| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
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Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | NA |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | 1 | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | NA |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | Yes | NA |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | NA |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|----|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | NA |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | NA |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 2 | NA |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 | NA |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | NA |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | NA |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | NA |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 2 | NA |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 | NA |

The quality of provision

| | | |
|---|---|----|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 2 | NA |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | NA |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 | NA |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | NA |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 2 | NA |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 2 | NA |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | NA |
| How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | NA |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | NA |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | NA |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy | |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise | Yes |
| Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse | Yes |
| Learners are educated about sexual health | Yes |
| The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe | |
| Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements | Yes |
| Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place | Yes |
| Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism | Yes |
| Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them | Yes |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution | |
| Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships | Yes |
| Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them | Yes |
| Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community | Yes |
| The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being | |
| There is provision to promote learners' basic skills | Yes |
| Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams | Yes |
| Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form | NA |
| Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy | NA |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school when we visited. It was a pleasure to talk to some of you and to watch you working and playing. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things we saw. You are lucky at your school because the headteacher, teachers and all the other adults look after you so well. They encourage you to be happy at school, to be healthy and to stay safe and they ensure you have good opportunities to learn exciting new things. Several of you told us how much you liked your teachers and how well you thought they helped you to learn. You behave very well and this makes it easier for the teachers to teach and for you to learn. You don't like it when people do not behave well, but you know what to do if they don't. You enjoy looking after each other such as when you are playground friends and being on the school council. You are also very interested in doing different things and love taking part in clubs, trips, plays, pirate and Viking days and other exciting things the school provides for you. Your teachers are keen to make the school even better for you. We think that to do that they need you to get better at writing. Year 4 pupils need to work really hard so that they do well in their end of year tests. It will also be good if your teachers tell you what you do well and how you can do even better when they mark your books. It was so good to find out that all of you are happy at school and that your parents say you enjoy coming to school. Keep working hard and being good at Beecroft!