



Bere Alston Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113246
LEA Devon
Inspection number 279123
Inspection dates 13 June 2006 to 14 June 2006
Reporting inspector Hazel Callaghan AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Station Road
School category	Community		Bere Alston
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Yelverton, Devon PL20 7AU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01822 840410
Number on roll	199	Fax number	01822 840519
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Richard G Leithall
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2000	Headteacher	Miss Kim Wild

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bere Alston is an average-sized primary school with 214 pupils on roll. Most children come from families of White British descent and no children are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. There is, however, an above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. More pupils join the school through the year in all classes than is found in most primary schools. When children start school, most have a below average range of skills and experiences. Many have weaknesses in their language skills and in their personal and social development.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bere Alston is an outstanding school that is exceptionally effective in promoting pupils' high achievement and superb personal development. Excellent leadership on behalf of the headteacher, with the strong support of the deputy headteacher and successful teamwork of the staff, ensure pupils' high standards are maintained. Their strong commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils results in outstanding pastoral care, guidance and support. High academic standards at the end of Year 6 are the result of pupils' eagerness to learn, teachers' consistently high expectations and exemplary teaching. The curriculum in Years 1-6 is outstanding and provides an extremely rich and stimulating learning experience for its pupils. The provision for children in the Reception class is good, but not of the same high quality as in the rest of the school. Aspects of the 'Early Years' curriculum are positively continued into Year 1 but are not yet fully developed. Assessment information gained in the Reception class is not easily compared with that collected in Year 1 and this weakens an otherwise efficient picture of each child's progress. These are minor weaknesses that the school is beginning to tackle. Pupils make good progress from Reception to Year 2, and exceptional progress between Years 3 and 6. Very effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have provided staff and governors with an accurate view of its strengths and relative weaknesses, even though it takes an over-modest view of its overall quality. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection and there is a secure capacity for further improvement. The school provides exceptional value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure children in the Foundation Stage make the best possible progress by continuing to develop Early Years activities in the Reception class and into Year 1
- provide clear links between the assessment systems used in the Reception class with those used in other classes so that children's achievement is more efficiently monitored.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and the standards reached by pupils in Year 6 are exceptionally high. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations for pupils' good progress and pupils respond very well to their encouragement and challenge. Children start in the Reception class with standards below those usually seen in most schools. Many children's language skills and personal and social development are well below average. They make good progress but by the time they transfer into Year 1 many children are not yet working at expected standards in many areas of their learning. The weakest elements are in children's early writing skills and the ability to work out simple mathematical problems. The best progress is made in children's personal development and this prepares children well for future learning. Good progress is made in Years 1 and 2. Standards in writing and mathematics improve significantly so that

by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly in line with the national average. Most pupils achieve well. Pupils' progress through Years 3-6 is outstanding in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' effective assessment of pupils' work is used very well to identify what pupils need to learn next. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils that are often exceeded and pupils' standards build year on year. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make similar excellent progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Both pupils' spiritual awareness and their understanding of other cultures have improved tremendously since the previous inspection. Pupils behave extremely well. They are friendly and polite, and show great care for one another. Older pupils, for example, gain real pleasure from reading with children in the Reception class and act responsibly as playground 'buddies'. Pupils enjoy their lessons, especially when a lot is expected of them: they prefer to be busy and to be challenged rather than finding things easy or boring. Most pupils enjoy school saying it is "super"; attendance is only satisfactory because significant numbers of parents take holidays during term time. Pupils' very good basic skills of communication, mathematics, computing, perseverance and teamwork prepare them very well for their future education and economic well-being. Pupils learn to be good community members responding well to such activities as raising funds for charities and helping at the village gardening club. Older pupils, for example, enthusiastically created a café for children in the Reception class but quickly came to recognise the hard work entailed in many jobs such as waitressing. Pupils understand well how to lead safe and healthy lives. Most choose to eat and drink healthily. They speak enthusiastically about keeping fit, especially by swimming and at clubs such as karate, country dancing and badminton. They recognise potential dangers around them, including the Internet, drugs, alcohol and strangers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching is excellent. Individual lessons are well planned and effectively structured so pupils achieve extremely well. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and each lesson builds successfully on the ones already learnt so that pupils' knowledge and skills accumulate through the school. Pupils are very well motivated because teachers challenge their ideas and stimulate their thinking. Marking is very effective in informing pupils about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Pupils consequently develop the same high expectations for their progress as set by teachers. Teaching assistants are well trained and work very successfully with pupils of all abilities. Those that work with pupils who have statements of special educational

needs are skilled at giving good levels of support while encouraging the pupils' independence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it successfully brings the outside world into this rather isolated part of Devon to enrich the learning of all pupils. The focus on English and mathematics is very good. All subjects, including French, are taught. They are often extremely well linked in topics that encourage pupils' creativity, practical skills and independence. There has been a marked improvement in curricular planning, information and communication technology (ICT) and design technology since the previous report. Detailed planning ensures that the learning needs of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are well met. Innumerable excellent activities broaden and excite pupils' learning. There are wonderfully varied and very well attended sporting activities and clubs. Many visitors from the village and from abroad also contribute very positively to the curriculum, especially the cultural aspects. Exciting tasks, such as elephant decoration and didgeridoo workshops, are just two other examples of how pupils' multi-cultural education is promoted. Provision for developing pupils' understanding of how to develop healthy lifestyles is strong. The school continues to improve its curriculum. It is currently refining its provision for children in the Foundation Stage so that the 'Early Years' curriculum is of the same exemplary standard as that of the rest of the school and aims to continue elements of this programme into Year 1.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff take the care of the pupils very seriously and provision for child protection and health and safety is strong. Pupils' pastoral care and emotional well-being are promoted extremely well and pupils are confident that staff will help and support them. It is the importance that the school places on each individual that makes their care and support so successful. The progress of all pupils is properly tracked in all classes, and clear and challenging targets for pupils' future learning are regularly set and reviewed. These targets are shared with pupils so that they understand how to improve and they are encouraged to assess their own work and progress. The school has built a very good partnership with parents, seeing them as important contributors to pupils' progress and well-being, though it has not recently reminded them about the need to attend regularly and to arrange holidays in holiday time where possible. There are very good links with parents of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the details of their children's work and progress are regularly discussed with them. Outside agencies are used well to support pupils' when required.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. Her strong sense of purpose is shared by all staff. This united approach is responsible for the exceptional quality of care and support given to all pupils, their outstanding personal development and the maintenance of exceptionally high standards. Management procedures are comprehensive and efficient. There are thorough systems for monitoring pupils' standards and progress in all classes. Data is used very well to identify pupils' learning needs and to provide good levels of support. Assessment information gained in the Reception class, however, is not easily compared with that collected in Year 1 and this weakens an otherwise efficient picture of each child's progress from its earliest days in school. The school monitors, reviews and evaluates its work rigorously and effectively. The governors' monitoring role has been improved and they provide good levels of support and challenge. Parents' opinions and suggestions are sought and their comments are taken carefully into account. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good and the school has the secure capacity to improve even further.

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Inspection judgements

<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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	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	2	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?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	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	1	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	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	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	1	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	1	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

Dear Children I am writing to say thank you for making us feel welcome in your school and for helping us with our questions. We really enjoyed chatting to you and found everything you said very interesting. I thought you would like to know that we thought your school is excellent. What we liked about the school:

- you are very happy at school and really enjoy your lessons
- you get on very well with each other and the adults in the school
- you behave sensibly and are extremely kind to each other
- you make excellent progress in your lessons; you want to do well and teachers know what you need to do to improve
- you are given lots of opportunities to take responsibility and you do it very well
- all the adults look after you extremely well and help keep you safe and happy
- we think you are very good at making sensible choices about keeping healthy and safe
- we think your headteacher is an exceptionally good leader and all the staff work together successfully to make this a very special school.

What we have asked the school to do:

- some of the ways of learning that you use in Reception should be extended into Year 1 for those who need them
- teachers need to find easier ways of recording how well children are getting on as they move from Reception into Year 1.

Thank you again for helping us find out about your school. Mrs Callaghan (Lead inspector)