



Bernards Heath Infants' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117135
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 279993
Inspection dates 21 March 2006 to 22 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs. Linda Killman LI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Sandridge Road
School category	Community		AL1 4AP
Age range of pupils	5 to 8		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727852106
Number on roll	203	Fax number	-
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Alison Marsay
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Kathleen Scruton

Age group 5 to 8	Inspection dates 21 March 2006 - 22 March 2006	Inspection number 279993
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is an average size school for children aged from three to seven years. There is a higher than average number of children from minority ethnic groups, some of whom do not speak English at home. The number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. When children start in the Nursery at age three, their abilities are generally at the level expected. The school provides education for some children awaiting a place in the school nearest to their family home. Consequently, higher than average numbers of children join or leave the school mid-year. The school has gained the Artsmark Silver Award for its commitment to art, music, dance and drama.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school judges itself to be a good, inclusive school and the inspectors agree. It provides good value for money. Families from many walks of life are warmly welcomed and their young children flourish. Parents overwhelmingly support the school and appreciate all that it provides. From an average starting point in the Nursery, children make good progress as they move through the school. In Year 2, standards are above the national average in reading and writing and broadly average in mathematics. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English also make good progress. Teaching is mostly good and children's basic skills develop successfully. The teachers place a strong emphasis on speaking and listening in lessons and consequently, the children are articulate. The children know how well they are doing but they are not always told exactly how to improve their work. High achievers are not always provided with activities that sufficiently challenge them. The school's curriculum is enriched by clubs, visits and visitors. A wealth of good resources enhances the children's learning. Leadership and management are good. The school successfully focuses on raising standards and promoting the personal well-being of the children. Managers have begun to use data and assessment information to check the children's progress and to set targets for improvement. However, this information is not yet analysed in sufficient detail or used by all staff. A combination of dedicated, effective leadership and a strong spirit of teamwork have successfully moved the school forwards since its previous inspection and it shows a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more demanding and challenging work for high achieving children. - Ensure that children are clear about how to improve their work. - Further develop the way assessment information and data is used throughout the school to track children's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children's achievements are good. From an average starting point in the Nursery they make consistently good progress as they move through the school. All children in Year 2, regardless of when they join the school, are expected to achieve a secure national average Level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Most of them successfully achieve this. Standards of attainment in Year 2 are above average in reading and writing, and broadly in line with the national average in mathematics. National assessments in all subjects improved from 2004 to 2005. An average number of pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in all subjects. The school keeps a watchful eye on the progress of children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children whose first language is not English. As a result, they also achieve well. Children use information and communication technology (ICT) in many areas of the curriculum and the standards

achieved are good. Due to the emphasis the school places on speaking and listening, standards achieved by the children in spoken English are exceptionally good throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development is good. They form good relationships with staff and one another. As a result, the school is a happy and caring place in which all children make good progress in acquiring literacy, numeracy and social skills that will benefit them in later life. For example, children make considerable gains in their numeracy and social skills when deciding how to spend money donated to each class by the parents' association. Children learn how to stay safe, which is vital in a school so close to a busy road. They say that there are many people they can go to for help if they are unhappy or frightened. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the improving attendance figures, which are now average. Children generally behave well. However, casual chatter in assemblies and restlessness in some lessons detracts from the otherwise calm atmosphere. The school encourages the children to eat healthy food and to take regular exercise. Year 2 children enjoy football training provided by Watford Football Club coaches and all children benefit from aerobic sessions taught by a specialist teacher. Older children happily take responsibility for younger children by being 'buddies' and by sharing books with Nursery children. The school is successful in encouraging children to think of others by supporting several charity collections each year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school succeeds in celebrating and valuing many different religions and cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning is mostly good. In all classes, teachers have established very good working relationships. The children enjoy their learning but occasionally they are expected to sit for too long listening to the teacher talking and as a result, become restless. There is a lack of consistency in how effectively teaching assistants are used to support individuals and groups. In the Foundation Stage children make good progress. The teachers provide an appropriate balance of teacher directed activities and those that children initiate themselves. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers plan activities that are well matched to the needs and abilities of most learners. However, high achieving children are not always provided with activities to challenge them and accelerate their learning. In the best lessons seen, the teachers frequently assess how well the children are progressing and use this information to adjust their planning for the next lesson. They also tell the children how well they are doing and expect them to make a judgement about their achievements. Across the school, teachers do not always tell the children what they need to do next to move their learning on. Teachers use ICT effectively to capture the children's interest and motivate them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum. Improved ICT provision and its effective use have a positive impact on learning. The curriculum is skilfully adapted to meet the needs and abilities of children with learning difficulties and disabilities as well as those who speak English as an additional language. Parents say that they greatly appreciate the fact that the school has books and computer programs in their children's home language. Nursery and Reception children get off to a good start because they learn through a wide variety of practical experiences. There is a strong focus on children's personal development. The curriculum for Year 1 and 2 children is planned carefully to be relevant, practical and interesting. Good links are being developed between subjects. A very good range of enticing enrichment activities are provided such as chess, playing the ocarina, French, circus skills training, tennis coaching and drama workshops. These, together with a very good number of visits and visitors bring children's learning to life and have a very positive impact on their personal and social skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Children are exceptionally well cared for in this inclusive school. Staff know the children well and are quick to respond to their concerns. The school works effectively with other agencies to ensure that children and families in difficult circumstances are sensitively supported. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are identified quickly and given good support. Child protection as well as health and safety procedures are in place and understood by everyone. Children say they feel safe in school and enjoy it. Their progress is monitored carefully although children themselves are not always sure how they could improve their work. They have target books but the targets are written in complicated language which is difficult for young children to understand. This is why inspectors agree with the school that it provides excellent levels of care to all children, but feel there is more work to do in guiding and involving children in ways to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Through the headteacher's dedication and passion for every child to thrive, their education and well-being are cherished. Her accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses supports her in driving the school forwards. Key issues raised in the previous inspection have been tackled effectively. Parents speak highly of the school and justifiably, it enjoys a good reputation locally. Subject leaders are working well to develop their subjects. Improvements have been made to raise standards where they are weaker. The school is developing its ability to use data and assessment information to track and improve the performance of individual children. However, the evaluation of this information

is not yet sufficiently rigorous. The school's improvement plan is clearly focused on raising children's attainment and achievements. Managers have adopted a systematic, effective programme for checking and assuring the quality of teaching and learning. Their evaluations are accurate and the feedback provided for staff further develops their expertise. The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge. Parents' views are regularly sought and are carefully considered. The interior and exterior of the building are very well maintained providing a pleasant, vibrant setting for learners. The setting benefits from the investments made in special features such as the outdoor balance trail and sensory garden. The school's managers are leading the school forward purposefully and provide the school with a good capacity to make further improvements.

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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?	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	NA	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	No
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

We enjoyed our visit to your school. We learned a great deal about your school by talking to you and watching you learn. We thought that you would like to know what we liked about your school and how we thought it could get even better. - You made us both feel very welcome and greeted us with a smile. - You enjoy coming to school because you feel safe and you really like your teachers. - You all get on well together and you know right from wrong. - You work hard. - You are good learners. - You are especially good at explaining what you have learned by talking to the adults or your friends. - Every year that you are at the school, you make good progress. - You have lovely equipment to use in school to help your learning. Your headteacher runs the school well and your parents are right to think that you go to a good school. What we have asked the school to do now to make it even better is: - To make sure that you are all given work that makes you think hard. - To tell you what you need to do to make your work even better. - To keep an even closer eye on how much you are learning. We wish you all the best in the future.