



Bethersden Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118372
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280301
Inspection dates 8 June 2006 to 8 June 2006
Reporting inspector George Logan AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Road
School category	Community		Bethersden
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Ashford, Kent TN26 3AH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01233 820479
Number on roll	132	Fax number	01233 820646
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2004	Headteacher	Mr Andrew Macey

Age group 4 to 11	Inspection dates 8 June 2006 - 8 June 2006	Inspection number 280301
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of Bethersden and the surrounding area. Most pupils are White British, with a very small number of mixed-race pupils. Several pupils come from the Traveller community. A small number of pupils are identified as vulnerable. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly similar to children of a similar age. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. There is a voluntary sector pre-school, which most Reception children have attended, in the school grounds. In 2004 the school was designated by Ofsted as underachieving.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bethersden Primary is a rapidly improving school and its previous designation as underachieving no longer applies. It provides a satisfactory standard of education and sound value for money. Although underlying weaknesses in teachers' expectations and assessment have taken time to resolve, good progress has been made in the current year and the previous significant underachievement in Years 3 to 5 is no longer evident. The local authority has worked closely with the headteacher and governors to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and the benefits are showing through in pupils' significantly improved progress. The headteacher is an effective leader who has a clear view of what the school needs to do. The school's own evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. Much has been achieved in terms of curriculum, robust assessment procedures, accommodation and resources. Parents recognise the extent of the improvements in their increased support and the high number of pre-school children who now enter Reception. They feel that the school has listened to their views and acted upon them. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children make good progress and almost all achieve the expected level in most areas of learning by the end of the Reception year. The challenge for the school is to continue to build on recent improvements and inherent strengths by consolidating and improving the quality of teaching. The recent and rapid improvement indicates that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. Almost all identified weaknesses have been tackled. However, the quality of marking, whilst satisfactory, is too varied. Too much is not useful in pointing out to pupils what they need to do to improve. In addition, senior managers, in particular the headteacher, undertake most of the quality assurance work in the school. Subject leaders have, until now, had little responsibility for evaluating standards and pupils' achievement. As a result there is an undue burden on the headteacher, while staff have insufficient opportunity to make use of, and extend, their skills and knowledge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role and effectiveness of subject leaders, so that they are more fully involved in monitoring pupils' learning.
- Achieve greater consistency in the quality and rigour of teachers' marking of pupils' work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the school with skills similar to most children of their age. In Reception they make good progress across all areas and almost all achieve, and a few exceed, the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. At the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been about average for the last five years. The standards in the current Year 2 are better because pupils are making better progress than they used to. Many pupils are working at above-average levels in reading and mathematics.

Historically, too many pupils in Years 3 to 5 have not been achieving as well as they should. Since the last inspection, the school, working closely with the local authority, has successfully tackled this underachievement. More accurate assessments and better use of the information gained from them are helping teachers and senior managers to set pupils challenging targets and monitor their progress towards them. Currently, progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Particularly good progress is evident in mathematics in Year 6, where standards are above average. There are also high standards in reading in Year 5. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and make good progress. Pupils from a Traveller background achieve high levels of attendance, are integrated and supported well and make appropriate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal Development and well-being is good. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is satisfactory. Their behaviour is good and they support each other well. They feel that they are listened to and that a number of their ideas have been adopted. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities and there are several successful initiatives to encourage pupils to look after each other. For example, a buddy system ensures that all pupils are included in activities in the playground. Spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils engage confidently with each other and are keen to talk to visitors. They have a secure sense of right and wrong. The school is aware that it could be doing more to promote an awareness of the diversity of multicultural Britain. Children in the Reception Year make good progress in social and emotional development. Pupils develop a healthy lifestyle. Ample physical education (PE) lessons are augmented with additional PE activities during Golden Time and outside of lessons. Games equipment is available during breaks and is well used. Healthy lifestyles are promoted through the Healthy Schools initiative and pupils are well aware of the need for a healthy diet.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching in Reception is good because staff understand well how young children learn and provide a wide range of challenging and motivating activities. The last inspection identified differences in the quality of teaching and learning between younger and older pupils. As a result of intensive support and training and the commitment of staff, teaching across the school is at least satisfactory. Several good lessons were observed during the inspection. Better opportunities for practical work and co-operative working with partners, in the context of the redesigned curriculum, have significantly improved pupils' learning. Teachers' expectations, based on challenging targets, have risen. Teachers' understanding and use of assessment information have improved significantly from a very low starting

point. They now have secure information about the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' attainment so that planning is increasingly well matched to pupils' needs. This contributes significantly to better achievement. Pupils too are more aware of the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve. All have clear targets which they generally understand. However, the quality of marking varies greatly in rigour and usefulness and is not sufficiently linked to current targets. Effective support from very competent learning support assistants enables pupils with learning difficulties to make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The school has undertaken a major curriculum reorganisation and now offers a good range of experiences for pupils. This includes themed weeks, French lessons and an extensive programme of visits. Good use is made of the local environment. For example, older pupils have recently taken part in a Problem-Solving Day at the Rare Breeds Centre. These changes, together with very good opportunities in music, information and communication technology (ICT) and in sport and physical education, have significantly improved the quality and range of the curriculum. There is a wideranging and well-supported programme of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum for Reception children is good. All areas of learning are covered well and provision has improved with the development of a better outdoor learning area. Across the school, improved resourcing has meant increased use of ICT to support learning in other subjects. The programme for personal, social and health education is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care for pupils. Well-established procedures ensure that pupils are safe and secure. The school is particularly good at looking after pupils who are especially vulnerable. Good relationships have been established with the families of Traveller pupils. The school supports these pupils well. Much has been done to improve the school's accommodation and security and to provide an attractive environment where pupils can learn and play in safety. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported. Detailed targets are set for all pupils and they now have a clearer idea of how to improve. Pupil assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress are satisfactory, although some inconsistencies in the quality of marking remain. Links with parents have improved significantly. Parents now contribute better to the work of the school. Community links are good, as are links with other schools, particularly through the Rural Action Zone initiative.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides strong, energetic leadership based on an accurate analysis of needs. He has a clear vision for

the improvement of the school. He has worked very hard to establish a team of teachers who successfully work together to raise standards. The deployment and use of teaching assistants is very good. There have been a number of successful initiatives. These have included better assessment procedures, the development of a richer curriculum and a major refurbishment of the premises. Senior managers have worked hard to raise the expectations of staff, pupils and parents. This has taken time and effort, but is finally showing through in improving standards. The local authority has provided effective support and the school has been quick to build upon any input. Progress in the last year has been good and the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. Parents are increasingly supportive and recognise the emerging strengths. Secure systems exist to measure the effectiveness of the school. However, almost all quality assurance activities are carried out by senior managers and this represents a considerable commitment, particularly for the headteacher. As yet, subject leaders have had insufficient involvement in monitoring and improving their subjects, so that the responsibility for ensuring consistency of achievement across the school is not yet evenly shared. Governors are increasingly involved in monitoring the school's work. The governing body is now well organised to fulfil its responsibilities. The use of resources and additional funding is very effective, leading, for example, to improvements such as the new ICT suite, the library and the refurbishment of accommodation.

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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?	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	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	3	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	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	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	3	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, Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school yesterday. It was good to spend a little time with you and to have the chance to meet some of you – especially the school council who talked to us so readily. You are very lucky to go to school in such an attractive setting and there are many good things about your school. It is a school that is working hard to get even better. Your attitudes to work are good – you listen carefully and work very well with your partners. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are learning faster than they were and are making better progress. You are taking more care with the way you present your work. We have asked Mr Macey to work with the staff to make sure that the marking is more detailed so that you know what you need to do to make your work even better. We also think that more teachers could be involved in making sure that all pupils are doing as well as they can and that lessons are as interesting as possible. You like the changes that have been made – the improvements to the accommodation, the new library, the attractive new computers, the opportunities to learn musical instruments and the clubs, sports activities and outings which you are involved in. You seem to enjoy the topics which you now cover in lessons and feel that they make your learning more interesting. We know that you appreciate the changes which have taken place in your school because you told us so, and we hope that everyone will continue to work to make sure that the school becomes better still. We wish you every success in the future. With all good wishes, George Logan Lead Inspector