



Bishops Castle Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123354
LEA Shropshire
Inspection number 281452
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005
Reporting inspector Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Oak Meadow
School category	Community		Bishops Castle
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Shropshire SY9 5PA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01588 638522
Number on roll	157	Fax number	01588 638418
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Francine Murray
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Ms Ann Bayliss

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools.

Description of the school

Bishop's Castle is a small primary school set in rural Shropshire. The school's roll is falling. Less than one per cent of the children are from minority ethnic groups and no children are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of children claiming free school meals is about average. More children than is usual have learning difficulties and disabilities. Children start in the Reception with low standards particularly in speaking and listening. The school has a stable staff and although few children leave during the school year, the proportion joining the school is higher than average. The school has recently achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Both the inspectors and the headteacher agree that the school has a number of strengths and no aspect of its work is inadequate. Its effectiveness is satisfactory overall. From a low start children do well in the in the Foundation Stage so that they catch up and reach the standards expected of them by the start of Key Stage 1. Standards throughout the rest of the school are broadly average and children make satisfactory progress in response to satisfactory teaching. The school is successful in catering for the more capable children, especially in mathematics, but more needs to be done for the middle attaining children in English. Lessons are planned well to cater for the different age groups in the mixed age classes, but children are not always made aware of the purpose of the lesson or how they can improve their work. All learners are looked after well and the support and care for children with additional learning needs is outstanding. The curriculum and range of extra-curricular activities are good.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher knows the strengths and areas for development of the school well, and these are accurately reflected in the school development plan. She has developed a shared style of leadership. The challenge offered by the supportive governing body over levels of standards achieved is not sufficient. There is some inconsistency in the way leaders check how subjects are taught and how well children are doing in their work. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection and can go on to make further improvements. It gives sound value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the rate of progress of all learners by evaluating more often how well they are doing and telling them what they need to do to improve
- raise the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by ensuring children always know the purpose of the lesson
- focus targeted support on English to ensure progress is in line with improvements made in mathematics
- increase the level of challenge and monitoring from the governing body and subject leaders

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, standards are average, although the progress made by children with learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding. The school caters well for brighter pupils but more could be done to raise standards for middle attaining pupils. The school has met challenging targets for higher attainers but there is insufficient challenge for middle attainers. This is reflected in the 2005 tests where results at in year 2 in all subjects went down overall but up for children achieving higher levels. Results at in year 6 fell in English and went up in mathematics. Standards in science remain stable.

The school knows there is more to do to raise the standards of literacy where progress is not as good as in mathematics.

Children join the school in a mixed Reception/Year 1 class. Their skills on entry are lower than usual for this age. They make good progress and by the time they enter Year 1, most reach the levels expected across all areas of learning. This is the result of good teaching in the Foundation Stage. Progress overall at is satisfactory because there is some variability in the quality of teaching especially for older pupils

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development is good. They enjoy school and are keen to attend. Attendance is satisfactory, but it is marred by holidays taken in term time by a minority of parents. Children settle well in the Reception Year, quickly learning to work and play together. This continues as they move up the school and children show consideration and respect towards each other, teachers and visitors. They are friendly, courteous and polite, building good foundations for later life. They know what is right and wrong. There are good relationships throughout the school which lead to the positive atmosphere.

Children say that they enjoy the wide range of activities offered to them. Overall learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Assemblies provide opportunities to reflect on beliefs but they are brief and sometimes lack depth. Children are keenly aware of the need to remain healthy by making choices about food and exercise. They know how to keep themselves safe and who to turn to for help. As one child said, 'If we have a problem, we can tell our teacher'. This is a caring community where vulnerable children are provided for very well.

Children have a strong sense of community. They help the school run smoothly through the school council, class monitors and playground buddies. They organise, finance and run events, such as Christmas fair stalls, which develop their life skills. They are committed to the school's improvement and are being well prepared for the future in most respects, but their literacy levels need to be higher. The school works well with other schools and contributes positively to the community. Children have initiated the 'green box' recycling project.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but it is inconsistent, particularly in Key Stage 2. The best teaching captivates children and moves along at a brisk pace. Teachers plan carefully together to meet the needs of all children and set clear expectations. They use skilful questioning which engages children, and increases their understanding and confidence. Marking is good when it tells children how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

Where teaching is less good children's sense of achievement and progress is more limited. In particular they do not fully understand the purpose of the lesson or what they need to do to improve. This is reflected in teachers' marking, which is too variable in quality and in some instances is not up to date or does not contain comments for improvement. In whole class teaching some teachers do not always give pupils enough opportunity to discuss their ideas.

In all lessons, teachers manage the demands of teaching mixed age classes well and children behave well. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and between pupils themselves. Teaching assistants provide effective support for learners throughout the school. Adults work well together in the classroom.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. Weaknesses identified at the last inspection in the Foundation Stage and in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have now been fully addressed. Children starting school have a good range of activities. The school has invested heavily in laptop computers and interactive whiteboards. Teachers and children work regularly with computers. The next challenge is to use them more in other subjects.

Early morning exercises to develop the memory and co-ordination skills are especially beneficial for children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The curriculum for children with additional learning needs and disabilities is outstanding. Early identification and support helps these children progress very well. Extension work for higher attaining children helps them do well. The school needs to make sure that average attaining children succeed, as other groups have, by providing a challenging curriculum for them too.

There is an impressive and extended range of activities provided during and after school, particularly in sport, music and ICT which are well attended and popular.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school prides itself on the quality of care. The support for children who are vulnerable and for those with additional learning needs is a strong feature of the school. Staff work very effectively with parents and a range of outside agencies to ensure that the children receive the help they need. As a result, they are well integrated into school and make outstanding progress.

Staff know children very well and give them good support and care. They make every effort to ensure that children remain healthy and safe, which gives them a secure environment to make progress.

Children's positive attitudes towards health, fitness and responsibility are directly linked to the good guidance the school gives. However, there is some room for

improvement in the way it guides children to know what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. When an inspector and the headteacher jointly observed a lesson, they came to the same conclusion about the quality of the lesson. There is a strong commitment to children's personal development and well-being, exemplified in the provision for children with additional learning needs which is outstanding. The school has an attractive and welcoming environment and has fully implemented improvements from the last inspection in accommodation.

The headteacher runs the school smoothly and has successfully created a shared leadership team, which has contributed to the success in the strategy to raise the achievement of higher attainers. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection in the Foundation Stage and ICT.

The way subject leaders monitor teaching in order to find out where the subject is taught best and check how well children are doing needs more development. The school does not yet make sufficient use of the information it gathers to raise standards. The governing body is supportive and manages finances well. It has anticipated the need to make difficult decisions as a result of the reduced number of children but does not challenge the school enough on standards and does not have enough contact with subject leaders. The school has a race equality policy in place and records and reports on racist incidents, which are very rare. It deals firmly with any incidences of racism but has not yet assessed the impact of the policy, which it is required to do.

The inspectors agree with the school that the leadership and management have secured improvements and can go on to improve 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?	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	3	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	1	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	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	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	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

We are writing to thank you for the chance we had to meet many of you when we came to visit your school for two days in September and for the many things you told us about your school. We would like to tell you what we thought.

There are many things your school does well:

your headteacher and all the adults look after you very well and you are happy to share your problems with them

some of you have done very well in your maths

you told us you feel safe and secure and enjoy coming to school

you enjoy all the extra activities organised for you throughout the school day

when some of you need extra help the teachers and other adults in the classroom support you very well

you behave well in school and get on well with each other

you have a lovely building to work in with plenty of computers

the youngest children make a good start when they first come to school.

There are a few things we have suggested to your headteacher which could help the school improve further:

your teachers could tell you more often how well you are doing and what next steps you need to take to improve your work

we think that some of you could do better in your reading and writing and you can help your teachers by working as hard at your writing as you have done in your maths work

the people who lead the school could check more closely how well you are doing in lessons so as to help the teaching get even better.

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and wish you all success in your future.