

Bollin Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106296
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	287473
Inspection date	17 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr K Marchant
Headteacher	Mrs M Downs
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002
School address	Apsley Grove Bowdon Altrincham Cheshire WA14 3AH
Telephone number	0161 9288900
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This average sized school lies in Bowdon, a suburb of South Manchester, but draws its pupils from a wider area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. There is a below average number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The Bollin Primary is an Eco-School, holds the Artsmark Silver and Activemark Gold awards and gained Healthy School status for the second time in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is a school in which pupils achieve outstandingly well in their academic work and also make enormous strides in their personal development. In the words of parents, 'The Bollin Primary is an excellent school and our children thrive on the sense of community it promotes.'

Children receive the best possible start in the Foundation Stage and the outstanding provision in both Nursery and Reception prepare them exceptionally well for what awaits them in Year 1 and beyond. They continue to make excellent progress across the school and reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 2. Their achievement in the arts, music and drama is equally impressive and they benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which do much to raise their confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils are very proud of their school and of what it does to promote healthy living, care for the community and conservation. They attend regularly, behave impeccably and treat their classmates and others with dignity and respect. The school council has an enviable reputation and does much to represent the views of pupils in all years: their suggestions about playground design have already borne fruit. Along with the fully trained playground leaders they work hard to ensure that everyone is happy in school and can benefit to the full from everything it offers.

The quality of teaching is outstanding and teachers deliver their lessons with the learning styles of each individual in mind. Great emphasis is placed on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as reinforcement for new learning and as a tool for pupils' personal research. Pupils use computers with skill and explain confidently to visitors the importance of new technology. The curriculum encourages pupils to be imaginative in their work and gives them maximum opportunity to reach the highest standards in all subjects. The vibrant display in classrooms and on corridors is a testament to the high levels of creativity pupils display when completing their assignments.

The well-being of each and every pupil is central to the work of the school. Teachers, teaching assistants and all other adults care deeply for their pupils and support them to the utmost. Irrespective of their levels of ability, pupils receive excellent guidance on how they can improve their performance in all areas of school life.

The headteacher leads by example and provides clear direction for the development of the school. She has the full support of the staff, who willingly take on responsibility for key areas. The very well informed governing body supports the school to the full, but is not afraid to challenge the leadership when it feels the need to do so. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate and staff at all levels have a quite perceptive vision of what is needed to ensure ongoing improvement. As parents say, 'The Bollin Primary School is a happy place to learn. Leadership is inspirational and teachers are dedicated, professional, enthusiastic and caring. We are delighted with the progress our children make.'

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant areas for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Skills on entry to the school are above average overall, but some children joining the Nursery have underdeveloped skills in communication, language and literacy. Pupils make outstanding progress in all key stages and reach high standards by the end of Year 6.

Excellent provision in the Foundation Stage and an emphasis on children taking early responsibility for their own progress lead to outstanding achievement in all areas of learning. This outstanding progress continues across Years 1 and 2 and standards in reading and mathematics are well above average.

In Key Stage 2, standards have improved since the time of the previous inspection. In 2007, for example, all pupils reached National Curriculum Level 4 or above in mathematics and science with 80% reaching the higher Level 5 in both subjects. There were similar results in English. Inspection evidence confirms these high standards and demonstrates that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those identified as vulnerable make excellent progress too. Their needs are identified quickly and there is a range of very effective intervention strategies to support their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The views of pupils about to start their careers in secondary education sum up most aptly their outstanding personal development: 'The Bollin has taught us so much about life, work, health and ourselves. It has taught us how to behave, how to trust others and how to understand and care for the world.' Pupils love their school, behave impeccably and their attendance is consistently well above average. They have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. They work hard to conserve energy and, by extensive recycling, to protect the environment further afield. The active school council encourages its constituents to abide by the 'Eco-School Commandments', promotes healthy eating through its daily fruit tuck shop and takes the lead in supporting many different charities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is impressive. Pupils work maturely together and trained playground leaders ensure that no-one feels lonely at break and lunchtime. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are outstanding: mutual respect abounds and the emotional well-being of each individual lies at the very heart of all the school tries to do. Music, drama and sport are key elements of school life and the school choir and orchestra sing and play at a variety of local venues. Pupils gain a valuable insight into other faiths and cultures by the visits to a wide range of places of worship, by the 'Asian Breakfast', the 'Eid Assembly' and a talk about the Jewish Passover meal. High levels of achievement in English and mathematics and ICT prepare pupils very well indeed for their next steps.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

High expectations of what can be achieved, appropriate challenge for pupils of all levels of ability and a requirement that pupils also learn from each other are just some of the outstanding teaching and learning. In an excellent Year 5 creative writing lesson for example, pupils were

encouraged to examine the emotions evoked by sound and music. They enjoyed their teacher's approach and their suggested words, 'alienated', 'tortured' and 'villainous' demonstrated just how much they were engaged by the subject-matter. The use of ICT as both a teaching and learning tool is very effective indeed and the electronic whiteboard features strongly in lessons. Year 4 pupils demonstrate impressive computer skills as they research 'Victorian children at play' on the Internet.

The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is also excellent and there is an ideal emphasis on learning through play and on encouraging pupils to use their imagination and to be creative. As the children say, 'We have a secret spaceship and we got some rocks on our trip to the moon!'

Marking is of high quality. Pupils are fully aware of the levels at which they are operating, receive detailed advice on how they can reach even higher standards and enjoy assessing their own performance and that of their classmates.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils extremely well and has an important effect on their personal development and self-esteem. Eco School status reinforces pupils' learning in science and mathematics and the strong emphasis on 'Big Writing' encourages younger pupils to be creative with the written word. The establishment of staff curriculum teams is very effective in promoting the transfer of skills across all subjects and the 'Arts Week' and 'Victorian Day' are two examples of how the school supports pupils' achievement in non-core subjects. The curriculum is further enriched by the teaching of German and French.

There is an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, including a variety of sports events and subject clubs. The very well attended ICT club, for example, gives pupils opportunities to extend their studies outside formal lessons. Annual residential visits for Years 4, 5 and 6 encourage social development and the lunchtime 'Fitbods' club engages pupils in fun physical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, support and guidance provided for pupils are outstanding and youngsters of all levels of ability are fully included in all aspects of school life. Parents talk positively of the 'wonderful, caring ethos' of the school and add, 'teachers have created an exceptionally warm and caring environment in which our children thrive and achieve to the best of their ability'. Pupils say there is always an adult to turn to if the need arises and that their teachers and teaching assistants are always kind to them. Younger pupils are grateful for the support they receive from their older colleagues and enjoy the games organised by the play leaders at break and lunchtime. Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements and the school has an extensive portfolio of risk assessments.

Assessment procedures are comprehensive and pupils' progress is tracked regularly and effectively at both individual and class level. Data is used very well to identify underachievement and pupils are actively involved in setting their own personal and subject targets. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive outstanding academic guidance too and many reach national average standards and above as a result.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management across the school are outstanding. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the high levels of teamwork amongst all staff and the excellent support and challenge from the governing body ensure ongoing improvement in pupils' achievement and the standards they reach. The school does not rest on its laurels: it has a keen and accurate understanding of its performance in all aspects and, because teachers know that nothing is ever perfect, it is always looking for strategies to develop further. Communication between staff for the benefit of the pupils in their charge is of the essence. Teachers produce detailed transition documents at the end of the academic year to ensure that all adults are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each individual pupil.

Senior leaders and curriculum team leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely and staff of all levels of experience are encouraged to share their expertise and take responsibility for in-service training. As a result, the whole staff team is fully committed to the clear educational direction provided by the senior leadership and they have a keen understanding of both current performance and the future potential of the school.

Excellent leadership at all levels and consistently high standards and achievement demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to improve further and that it provides outstanding value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you all so much for the wonderful welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn and everyone I met was very kind to me. I would now like to tell you the really good things about your school.

The Bollin Primary is an outstanding school and you are all very proud of it! Children in Nursery and Reception get an excellent start to their school careers and they have so many opportunities to learn with each other through play. You continue to make exceptionally good progress in all other years and by the time you leave at the end of Year 6 you reach very high standards in all your subjects. This is because the teaching you receive is outstanding and you also work so hard!

Your behaviour is excellent and you look after each other so well. You enjoy working in groups and you like to help your classmates when they find things difficult. You learn a lot about other cultures and like to celebrate a variety of religious festivals. Members of the school council try hard to find out what you think and make really good suggestions as to how your school can be made even better. You enjoy the Eco School activities, eat healthy food and keep yourselves fit. You particularly like the wide range of extra-curricular events and take a full part in arts, music and drama activities.

Your teachers and teaching assistants take very good care of you and make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. They also give you a lot of advice about how you can improve your work. Your headteacher and all your other teachers know exactly how to make sure that your school continues to improve.

Thank you once again for making such an important contribution to the inspection. Please continue to attend regularly, work hard and enjoy your studies. Your teachers and all those who care for you are very proud of what you have achieved.