



Bowdon CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106338
Local Authority Trafford
Inspection number 287489
Inspection date 8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Joe Peacock

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Grange Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Bowdon, Altrincham
Age range of pupils	5-11		Cheshire WA14 3EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 9288907
Number on roll (school)	418	Fax number	0161 9284881
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Keith Hine
		Headteacher	Mr Neil Hoskinson
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Situated in a fairly affluent suburb of Greater Manchester, the school is larger than average with the majority of children coming from White British backgrounds. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals is very low and the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average. The attainment of most children when they enter the two reception classes is well above average. The school has gained an Investors in People Award and has a Healthy School Gold Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school has accurately judged itself as outstanding in all areas and it provides excellent value for money. The headteacher is an inspirational leader with a passion for achieving excellence, which he communicates effectively to all staff. They are highly motivated and ensure that all children achieve their full potential and enjoy a worthwhile and rewarding education.

Very successful provision in the reception classes provides all children with stimulating and exciting learning, tailored to their individual needs. Class teachers and skilled teaching assistants work very well together to ensure that children make rapid all-round progress. All achieve the targets expected of them well before the end of their Reception year and achieve especially high standards in their speaking skills. The only disappointing feature is the outdoor area, which is too small to be able to match the quality and variety of learning experiences that are provided indoors for children.

By Year 2, almost all children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve the standards expected of them. Almost half achieve above average standards. The slightly weaker performance in writing by Year 2 children in the national tests in 2005 has been the focus of some decisive and successful action to raise standards. Year 6 children consistently achieve exceptionally high standards, with almost eight out of ten reaching the higher Level 5 in English, mathematics and science. High quality artwork, a full sports trophy cabinet and the tuneful singing and recorder playing in assembly show that high standards are also achieved in other subjects. Year 6 children, for example, demonstrated competences beyond their years when enhancing their computer presentation for an environmental topic.

Excellent relationships and extremely strong partnerships are contributing effectively to children's outstanding personal development and well-being. The school council relish the opportunity to express their views on different aspects of school life and all take their responsibilities seriously. Children have good knowledge and understanding of different world religions from first-hand contact with people in countries worldwide and through the high profile religious education curriculum. Children clearly enjoy coming to school and attendance has been improved to well above the national average, following a slight dip in 2005. The hard play areas at the school remain too small for the number of children. Although playtimes are well-organised and supervised, the lack of space means that children have little to do and this, on occasions, leads to boredom and lapses in the high standards of behaviour.

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent and teachers provide an outstanding range of activities in all subjects. Teachers have high expectations of children and the partnership with parents could not be closer. There is a wonderful atmosphere for learning throughout the school. Teaching assistants provide excellent support for children's learning, especially for those who find learning difficult. Staff plan lessons together and carefully monitor the progress. As a result, children of all abilities are successfully motivated and challenged by the interesting tasks that they are given to do. The current assessment procedures provide a wealth of information on the standards

being reached and they enable children's progress to be carefully tracked as they move through the school. However, they are time consuming and there is some duplication of information. Pastoral care and support are strengths and parents were keen to praise the school for how well it looks after their children. Parents and children know what targets have been set and these are closely monitored and evaluated throughout each term.

High quality teamwork ensures that high standards are maintained. Middle managers contribute effectively to the quality of management. As a result of their collective efforts, the school improvement plan accurately identifies priorities for improvement. All regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning and all other aspects of school life to ensure the best possible provision is available to children. As a result, the school has an excellent capacity to further improve. The governing body has highly qualified governors with much professional expertise to offer. It plays an important and effective role in supporting school improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve assessment procedures to make them more manageable and less time consuming.
- Improve the quality of the outdoor spaces, including the reception classes' outdoor area, to allow a wider range of activities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children's achievements in the Foundation Stage are outstanding due to the effective management of provision and enthusiastic staff who make learning exciting and fun.

Children continue to achieve highly in Years 1 to 6 and reach overall standards that are exceptionally and consistently high. All children achieve the challenging targets expected of them in English, mathematics and science. The most recent 2006 national tests results show that almost all Year 6 children achieved the higher Level 5 in each subject. The achievement of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent as they benefit from high quality support both in and out of the classroom.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

High quality teaching is a key factor in children's outstanding personal development. High standards of behaviour are expected and achieved resulting in a safe, happy school, free from bullying. However, the limited playground space restricts children's activities and, despite good organisation, occasionally leads to lapses from the generally high standards of behaviour. Attendance is well above average as a result of recent school initiatives to reduce unauthorised absence.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school successfully raises children's self-esteem and they try to do the best they can in lessons.

Cultural development has a high profile with each year group having links with a different country.

Children are energetic and understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise. Everyone has the opportunity before they leave to represent the school in sporting activities such as tag rugby, football and lacrosse.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

'We know parents have very high expectations and we do not want to let them or their children down.' All staff echo this view and they work together extremely well to ensure challenging and worthwhile activities for all children. . There is a positive atmosphere for learning in all classes, which enables children to respond well and try their best to meet the challenges presented to them. Teachers' energy and enthusiasm ensures that children clearly enjoy their learning. A wealth of assessment information is used really well to set challenging targets for all children. However, the school has correctly identified that it is too time-consuming in its present form and is planning to review its procedures. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because they are very well provided for by teachers and teaching assistants with a good range of specialist teaching skills.

Reception staff make good use of the spacious indoor accommodation but the limited outdoor accommodation restricts the range of activities on offer.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers children an excellent range of activities to meet their individual abilities, needs and interests. The curriculum is currently under review to establish more links between the different subjects. The Foundation Stage curriculum is outstanding, giving children an excellent start to school.

There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that extend learning and contribute much to children's personal development. A variety of educational visits and residential visits enrich the children's experiences further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The well-being of children is of paramount importance to everyone who works in the school. Strong systems exist to ensure pupils' health and safety. Parents agree that their children are cared for exceptionally well. The excellent partnership that they enjoy with the school helps their children to achieve as well as they do. The typically held view is, 'what a great school! We could not ask for more'. Academic guidance is very good with children and parents fully aware of the targets that have been set. The

support given to children who have learning difficulties is excellent and as a result, most make exceptionally good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership and management are key factors in the school's continued success. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and the views of staff, governors, parents and pupils are taken into account when deciding future priorities for improvement. This is a school that shows no sense of complacency and is not content to rest on its laurels. For example, initiatives to improve writing after weaker Year 2 results in 2005, have proved to be highly successful. The school rigorously tackles areas needing attention and this ensures that its capacity for further improvement is excellent.

There is a whole-school commitment to providing the best quality education for its children and a strong team spirit is evident amongst staff. All play a vital role in monitoring the school's work and performance. The supportive yet challenging governors further enhance management. They play their part in holding the school to account and acting as a critical friend.

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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	2
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.

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 for making me feel so welcome last Wednesday. I really enjoyed talking to you all and looking around your school. I thought that the displays of artwork were excellent and they show how much talent some of you have in this subject. The other things that I thought were particularly good were:

- how hard your headteacher and all the staff are working to help you to learn new things and to do good work
- how superbly well you behave in class and always try your best to finish your work. It was good to see you all getting on so well together at break times, even though you do not have much space to run around on the small playgrounds
- the excellent start that you all have in the reception classes with lots of interesting things to do, like making pictures of fireworks and using computers.
- I was very impressed with how well you are cared for and supported by your teachers, their helpers and all the lunchtime staff.

I am asking your teachers to save some time and effort by finding simpler ways to measure how well you are doing and to improve the outdoor spaces for Reception children and the playgrounds. I am sure that you would all like to have more space when you go out to play!

Thank you again, for helping me with this inspection. I can see why you enjoy coming to school so much with such a lot of interesting and exciting things to do like the after-school clubs and all the sporting activities. You are right to be proud of your school because it is outstanding.