



# Bexhill Primary School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 108780  
**Local Authority** Sunderland  
**Inspection number** 288186  
**Inspection dates** 25–26 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Sheila Mawer

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

|   |                    |                         |                          |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary            | <b>School address</b>   | Bexhill Road             |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community          |                         | Townend Farm, Sunderland |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 3–11               |                         | Tyne and Wear, SR5 4PJ   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed              | <b>Telephone number</b> | 0191 5536916             |
| <b>Number on roll (school)</b>            | 342                | <b>Fax number</b>       | 0191 5536917             |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body | <b>Chair</b>            | Cllr Robert Symonds      |
|   |                    | <b>Headteacher</b>      | Mrs Joy Lowther          |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 July 2001        |                         |                          |

|                  |                         |                          |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Age group</b> | <b>Inspection dates</b> | <b>Inspection number</b> |
| 3–11             | 25–26 January 2007      | 288186                   |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils in this larger than average school come from an area of high unemployment and considerable social deprivation. Over a third are eligible for free school meals, which is twice the national average. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A quarter of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is above average. The attainment of children on entry to the Nursery is very low. The school has gained many awards including the Healthy Schools award, Activemark and Artsmark silver. Students are trained at the school for a career in teaching.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that has a number of strong features. It provides satisfactory value for money. It excels in outstanding provision in the Foundation Stage. Parents' extremely positive views of the Foundation Stage are entirely justified and reflect most parents' opinions of the school, when writing, 'our children have gained so many new skills because the school always considers their needs and provides interesting activities. They love school so much that even when they're ill, they won't stay at home.'

Progress is outstanding in the Foundation Stage and good in the Key Stage 1 classes due to the effectiveness of the teaching. By the end of Year 2 standards are broadly average, but well below average in reading. Although standards in the 2006 national tests at the end of Year 6 were mainly well below average, this represents satisfactory achievement given these pupils' starting points. This year group experienced some disruption to their education in the Key Stage 2 classes and previous years' results have been better. The picture is now improving but there is not always enough challenge for the more able pupils and this slows their progress.

Pupils are very happy in school because of excellent relationships, which help considerably to raise their confidence and self-esteem. The care and support they receive from an early age enable them to feel happy and valued. The strong focus on personal development ensures that pupils behave well and have a clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating, keeping safe and regular exercise. The curriculum is good and considerably enriched through a wealth of additional activities that provides great enjoyment for all pupils. The rich and varied curriculum in the Foundation Stage provides constant pleasure and excitement for the children and stimulates their curiosity for learning. Speaking and listening are effectively promoted throughout the school, but the older pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English.

The many positive aspects of the school are due to the strong dedication of the headteacher, staff and governors, who are committed to school improvement and have made a considerable difference to the lives of many of the most vulnerable pupils in the school. Although the school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and leadership and management are satisfactory, there has been less rigour in monitoring and evaluating school developments against their impact on pupils' learning.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards particularly in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that teaching and learning provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils.
- Extend opportunities for writing in all subjects in the Key Stage 2 classes.
- Ensure the monitoring and evaluation of key priorities focus sharply on the pupils' learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Most children join the Nursery with very low levels of skills. Through excellent teaching in the Foundation Stage they make outstanding progress, but it remains that few reach the standards expected for their age by the time they join Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress in the Key Stage 1 classes and, by the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average, except in reading, which is well below average.

At the end of Year 6, the national tests in 2006 indicated that pupils' achievement was satisfactory, given their low starting points. The results were well below average in English and science and below average in mathematics. These pupils experienced some disruption to their education through changes in staffing and they failed to reach the targets set for them. In previous years, the results have been better and the trend has been below average. However, a consistent feature throughout the Key Stage 2 classes is that the more able pupils do not do as well as they should because tasks are not always challenging enough for them to learn well. The school is ambitious for pupils in the current Year 6 and challenging targets have been set. Reliable school data indicate that these pupils are broadly on track to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they receive effective support. A common feature of both key stages is that girls have performed better than boys in recent tests in English. The school is taking appropriate action to remedy this.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development of learners is good. Attendance is good and this reflects the hard work and effort the school has invested in continuing to improve attendance. Participation levels in school clubs are high and pupils are eager to take part. They respond well to opportunities to take on additional responsibility, such as serving on the student research team. This has given them a satisfactory voice in school developments, in agreeing, for example, more healthy eating options with the cook. Photographs around the school show that pupils have regular opportunities to plan fund-raising initiatives and to be involved in local events. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well and listen attentively in lessons and school assemblies. During special achievement assemblies, pupils' self-esteem is promoted exceptionally well by seating those identified as 'stars of the week' in front of the school and displaying their photographs. Pupils have good opportunities to mix socially at break times by taking advantage of high quality outside facilities for sports and games. They are courteous and friendly towards each other and especially to visitors.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with considerable strengths in the Foundation Stage and good practice in the Key Stage 1 classes. Relationships are a strength of the school, encouraging the pupils to work hard and enjoy their learning. Teachers' explanations are clear and the pace of lessons is generally quick. There are good opportunities for discussions and this promotes pupils' speaking and listening skills well. In the best teaching, challenging questions help pupils to think hard and learn well, but this is not always a feature of some satisfactory lessons. Teachers generally use assessment information well in many classes to match tasks to pupils' needs. However, in some Key Stage 2 classes, tasks for the more able pupils lack challenge and this slows the pace at which they learn.

Teaching assistants play an important and effective part in lessons and work in close partnership with teachers. They provide particularly good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling them to achieve well. Teaching is exemplary in the Foundation Stage. Learning experiences are challenging and build upon the children's previous learning. They are encouraged to find things out for themselves and to consolidate their learning independently. The marking of pupils' work in English is very good and helps them to know how well they are doing, but it is less helpful in other subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good because it is broad and balanced and offers exciting enrichment opportunities. The outstanding curriculum in the Foundation Stage is delivered particularly well in the outdoor classroom and through imaginative play. The curriculum is largely topic-led across the school. Therefore it is flexible and can readily meet the interests of pupils and enable them to learn about current events, whilst developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. It has recently been adapted to address weaknesses in pupils' basic skills and to improve the achievement of boys in English. However, the impact on standards has been greater in the Key Stage 1 classes, especially in writing but less so in reading. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well for the presentation of work and to help pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to develop their skills of working independently. Drama features very strongly across the curriculum. As a result, pupils' speaking and listening skills, as well as their creativity and social development, continue to improve. The school makes impressive use of Creative Partnerships and Theatre in Education to enrich the curriculum with exciting theatre visits and school productions. The wide range of clubs and visits, including links with a local university and opportunities for residential experiences, is developing pupils' awareness of the world outside school and, most notably, their enjoyment of education.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Provision is good. Child protection procedures are robust and good attention is given to pupils' safety to ensure that they are protected in school and during out-of-school activities. Particular care is taken to help pupils avoid the dangers of solvent and drug abuse and when accessing the Internet. Communication with parents and carers is good; for example, when the Internet policy was presented to parents, an interpreter was used to translate the policy to those whose English was not their first language. Pupils feel safe from bullying. The Student Research Team worked with a facilitator over a period of weeks to develop an anti-bullying policy relevant to the context of the school. The school has been particularly successful in re-engaging pupils who are disaffected and accelerating their personal and academic progress.

The school has made good improvements in monitoring academic and personal development. Pupils are involved in setting and reviewing their own targets. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress because reports include clear guidance on the next steps in learning. The school's family learning initiative is enabling parents to become more involved in their children's learning.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher has been successful in creating a strong sense of teamwork, a rich curriculum and a caring and supportive atmosphere, which is much appreciated by pupils and parents. Although improvements have been satisfactory, fewer pupils are making the very good progress that was a feature of most of the school at the last inspection. More effective systems for tracking progress have improved some teaching and learning and helped to identify pupils requiring additional support to help boost their learning. There is still more to do to improve the learning for all pupils. The school development plan is based on wide consultation with staff, governors, parents and pupils. Although it accurately identifies the key areas for improvement, monitoring and evaluation do not always focus on the impact on teaching and learning, and the improvement in pupils' achievement, especially in the Key Stage 2 classes. Governors are very supportive of the school and have a good understanding of its many strengths. Views about how well the pupils' achieve are less secure and the school is not always sufficiently challenged to explain the impact of initiatives on the pupils' learning. The many good features in the school provide a satisfactory basis for further improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | <b>School Overall</b> |
|---|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 3   |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?  | 2   |
| The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage  | 1   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 3   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 3   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | Yes |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 3 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 3 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> 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

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3   |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets   | 3   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 3   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   |
| 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**

The Student Research Team

Bexhill Primary School

Bexhill Road

Townend Farm

Sunderland

Tyne and Wear

SR5 4PJ

25 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome you gave Mr Sleightholme, Mr Brammer and me when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you all very much indeed and thank you all for being so polite and friendly and keen to tell us about your work and what interests you most.

Here are the things we think are best about your school:

- your good behaviour and how you work well in lessons and enjoy your learning
- your very good relationships so that everyone works and plays well together
- the great wealth of visits, visitors and clubs that are planned for you and help to make the learning fun
- the dedication of all the adults in school who help you to learn.

And to be even better:

- some of the older pupils could reach higher standards, particularly those who could tackle harder tasks
- we think if the junior pupils practised their writing in all subjects this would help writing to improve even more.

Your school is also going to keep a careful check on how well you are all learning and improving. You can help too by working hard to reach your targets.

Than you again and best wishes for the future to all of you.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector