



Broadmead Lower School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109483
Local Authority BEDFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 288395
Inspection dates 9–10 November 2006
Reporting inspector Geof Timms

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

Type of school	First	School address	Park Crescent
School category	Community		Stewartby, Bedford
Age range of pupils	5–9		Bedfordshire MK43 9NN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01234 768318
Number on roll (school)	76	Fax number	01234 768800
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Miss Debbie Hassall
		Headteacher	Mrs Kim Hewlett
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a few of other White, Indian or Traveller heritage. Children's attainment on starting school varies from year to year but is often below that expected. There are particular weaknesses in language skills and social development. The number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, but high enough in some year groups to affect standards. A below average proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had only been in post for two months.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective and improving school. The changes being instigated by the new headteacher are based appropriately on an accurate and honest evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school provides good value for money. In Reception, children make good progress in all areas of learning because of good provision, and most children are close to achieving the expected levels by the end of the year. Throughout the school, good progress is made in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The latest standards attained in tests in Years 2 and 4, and the standards demonstrated by current pupils, are well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. Successful improvements have been made to pupils' reading through staff training, resourcing and new teaching methods, especially of letter sounds. The school has analysed recent mathematics tests and identified the main weakness as the solving of word problems. Pupils' written work in a number of subjects is often spoilt by untidy presentation and storage, and the overuse of photocopied worksheets for recording their work. Insufficient opportunities are found for pupils to write at length in other subjects. This is a shame because the best writing seen during the inspection was linked to a history topic.

The pupils' personal development is good and this is a major reason for the good progress they make. They are well behaved, attentive and interested in lessons. One older girl explained how she liked practical and activity-filled lessons. Pupils clearly enjoy school. They are able to explain how to keep healthy and safe, and they show pride in the work they do to raise money for charity and to help improve the local community. The progress they make in learning basic skills is preparing them well for their future education and for life after school.

Teaching and learning are largely of good quality, especially in the Reception class, and across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers have very effective relationships with their pupils and know their individual needs well. Lessons are well planned. The marking of pupils' writing is good but marking is less helpful in other subjects. The curriculum is satisfactory, but planning does not create very effective links between subjects so that pupils can use their skills more practically and creatively. Pupils are not always clear why they are learning something or how they can be successful. Pupils are well cared for and the school meets requirements regarding their safety and security.

The headteacher has very quickly got a good grip on the important priorities that need to be addressed if standards are to be further improved, and she is well supported by the staff and the governing body. Changes to subject leadership have been positively greeted by the staff, although they have not yet been extended to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and pupils' learning. Parents are very positive about the school. One commented that 'My son says the school is very good and the teachers are very nice.' The school has demonstrated good improvement by raising standards over the past two years and by introducing successful changes to the reading curriculum. These improvements, together with the evident impact of the

new headteacher on the quality of leadership, show that there is a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' problem-solving skills.
- Spread good practice by developing the monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders.
- Improve the presentation of pupils' written work.
- Improve the curriculum by making it more relevant to pupils' interests, developing more links across subjects and by making it clearer to pupils what is expected of them and what they are expected to achieve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children's attainment on entry varies from year to year due to the small size of each cohort. There are significant weaknesses in some years, mainly in children's language skills and their personal and social development. Previous weaknesses in creative development have greatly improved. There is good progress during the Reception year and most children are close to achieving the expected levels by the time they start Year 1. The progress made by those pupils who were in Year 2 in 2006 was good, especially in reading, where standards were well above average. Standards were above average in writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 4, standards were well above average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. The standards in mathematics have been a recent concern and the school has analysed test results and discovered a weakness in the pupils' problem-solving skills. The current standards are again above those expected in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils are on line to achieve the challenging targets set for them. All groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The strengths found at the last inspection have been maintained and the pupils have very positive attitudes towards school. They enjoy school and talk positively about their lessons and teachers. They are well behaved in and out of class. The school has a positive and friendly ethos which helps learning. Pupils know about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. They do a lot of charity work and also have links with the local community, such as discussing a local play area with a parish councillor. The school council members are articulate and knowledgeable about their role in the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance has been below average recently but the school is working hard to emphasise to parents the importance of regular attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The good teaching is particularly effective in instilling literacy and numeracy skills, and helps ensure the good achievement in these subjects, preparing pupils well for their future education. Teachers build very good relationships with their pupils and this helps create a positive learning ethos. There is good marking of pupils' written work in English which helps them understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. This is less evident in other subjects. The teaching in subjects such as history and geography is only satisfactory, as teachers rely too much on photocopied work sheets and do not insist on sufficiently well presented, finished work. Tasks are not always well matched to pupils' prior attainment or ages. The teaching assistants are effective in supporting teachers, especially when working with less able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

This aspect is satisfactory, as was found in the school's own evaluation of current curriculum planning. Although all statutory requirements are met, and the full National Curriculum is in place, there are missed opportunities to make useful links between subjects or to develop a curriculum that encourages more creativity in line with the latest national guidance. The school has recognised this shortcoming and has good plans to improve provision. This has already happened in reading, where the introduction of a new system for teaching letter sounds is having a major impact on pupils' learning and their enthusiasm for their work. There is a good range of enrichment activities given the ages of the pupils, including sport, music and craft activities, and opportunities to use construction kits.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect is good because the school has a very caring and positive ethos, where pupils' achievements are celebrated and adults are careful to ensure pupils' safety. Statutory safeguarding of pupils' welfare meets requirements and first aid and child protection arrangements are good. Pupils who find learning hard are identified early and have their needs addressed using an effective range of methods and strategies. The quality of academic guidance for pupils is good. Systems for checking their progress in reading, writing and mathematics are effective. The school is at an early stage of using this information to set clear targets for improvement to help pupils understand what they need to do next.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Although only recently appointed, the headteacher has demonstrated a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. She has quickly encouraged the staff to support a number of important innovations. Previous leadership was also effective, as is shown by the successful efforts made to improve reading over the past two years. The school improvement planning arises from good self-evaluation and contains appropriate priorities for further improvement. Subject leadership is one area being developed. Currently, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are undeveloped, and not fully effective in spreading good practice. The tracking and analysing of test results are also at an early stage. The governing body works efficiently to support and challenge the school. Governors have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school works well with a variety of agencies and tries hard to involve and consult parents.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

13 November 2006

Dear Children

Broadmead Lower School, Park Crescent, Stewartby, Bedfordshire, MK43 9NN

Thank you very much for the way you welcomed me to your school. I very much enjoyed my visit and you were very good at helping me find out some of the good things about the school. I want to especially thank the school council members I met, and also those of you I had lunch with, who were so friendly and willing to talk to me about Broadmead.

Your parents and those of you I spoke to told me that you are happy at school. I could see this as I looked round because you were all enjoying lessons and you were working hard. You are very well behaved in lessons and this helps your teachers help you to learn new things. You are learning to read and write, and to count and use numbers well. I liked the way you knew how you can keep yourselves healthy by eating the right things and keeping fit. You also told me about ways you can keep safe.

The teachers are working very hard to help you learn new things. You have also got a new headteacher, and Mrs Hewlett has already made some important improvements to the school. Together with the teachers, she has good ideas for helping you make your school even better in the future.

To help you learn even more, I think the teachers and other adults need to:

- help you get better at solving number problems
- help each other by sharing good ideas
- make the work you do more exciting and interesting and help you understand exactly what is expected and what you can do to improve your work.

You can help yourselves to be better learners by making sure your work is always neat and tidy, and carefully finished.

Thank you again for helping me with the inspection. Enjoy your time at Broadmead and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

(Lead inspector)