

Benwick Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110627
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
Inspection number	288725
Inspection dates	19–20 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Janet Copeland
Headteacher	Ms Gillian Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	High Street Benwick March Cambridgeshire PE15 0XA
Telephone number	01354677266
Fax number	01354677266

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small rural primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is a little above the national average and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than found in schools nationally. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and no pupil is at an early stage of acquiring English. Some year groups have high levels of pupil mobility with a number of pupils joining at other than the usual times. The school was awarded Healthy Schools status in 2007 and also has an International School Award. This is an accreditation for international work undertaken within the curriculum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Benwick provides its pupils with a good quality education and inspection findings endorse the school's view of its own effectiveness. Value for money is good. The school is very well regarded by parents, as illustrated by one parent who wrote, 'My child's learning experiences at Benwick have been a real joy.' The school has a steely determination to improve and this together with its track record of tackling weaknesses are a winning combination for further successes.

Attainment when pupils start at the school differs from year to year, and they are often below national expectations in communication and language skills. Standards at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 similarly vary. Much of this is due to the small number of pupils in each year group and also the high levels of pupil mobility. The current picture of attainment reflects this with standards in the Foundation Stage at an expected level, a little above average at Year 2 and broadly average in Year 6. Writing standards continue to improve but there is still work to be done. The key factor, however, is that across the school pupils are achieving well from their variable starting points. Teaching is good. Teachers work well together and go beyond normal expectations to ensure that learning experiences are well planned and match the individual needs of the pupils. Assessment is good and marking of pupils' work is at times very good. However, teaching does not always make clear to pupils how they could contribute more to their own learning and improving their work, through their setting and reviewing of personal targets.

Pupils' personal development is good and pupils clearly enjoy school. Their good behaviour, positive attitudes, politeness and good attendance all help to create a strong sense of community and family cohesion where pupils gain much self-confidence and esteem. Pupils are cared for and respected well and they believe they have a genuine voice. Pupils know much about the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. There is a satisfactory array of opportunities provided for them to contribute to the school and wider community and they are well prepared for their future lives. The good curriculum adds to the quality of pupils' learning experiences and provision in the Foundation Stage continues to improve well. Key basic skills, such as in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), are qualities that are developed well within the formal curriculum in Years 1 to 6. The school recognises, however, the scope to enliven learning further by instigating more exciting curriculum projects or enterprise initiatives.

At the core of the school's success are good leadership and management with the headteacher playing the pivotal role. The strong team spirit and the fact that all members of staff know their contribution is valued, result in a collective commitment to improving provision and ensuring that all pupils achieve well. Governors play their part well through good levels of support and by playing a proactive role in evaluating the effectiveness of the school. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise writing standards further by improving spelling and use of punctuation.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to put their literacy, numeracy and computer skills to the test in wider ranging curriculum and enterprise initiatives.
- Expect pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and to play a bigger part in setting and reviewing their targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all abilities achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. Children's skills by the end of the Foundation Stage are at an expected level but they have made good progress. Year 2 pupils' standards are a little above average. Standards for the present Year 6 are broadly average but this represents good progress because attainment for this group of pupils when they were in Year 2 was well below average. The school focus has rightly been on driving up standards in writing, and although this is still work in progress, there have been significant improvements over the last two years. The good achievement of pupils owes much to the good quality of teaching, challenging target setting and to the way that leadership and management of the school tackle identified areas for improvement with rigour and determination.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils behave well and often very well. They enjoy school and this is reflected in the above average attendance rates. Pupils show good levels of respect for adults and to one another. They have a good awareness of the impact their actions can have on others. The school's standing as an International School, awarded by the British Council, and much work about differing faiths and religions, results in pupils having a good understanding of lives and cultures from around the world. The school has recently gained Healthy School status and there is little doubt that pupils have a good awareness of how to lead healthy lifestyles and manage risks in their lives. The good teaching of basic skills and opportunities for pupils to work together and to solve problems help them develop qualities that will support them well in their future lives. However, as pupils pointed out, not enough opportunities are provided for them to take on responsibilities around the school or run fundraising and enterprise initiatives that would help them make a more telling contribution to the school and wider community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers manage pupils well, relationships are good and the planning and stimuli for lessons are well thought out. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to make learning come to life and the good teaching of writing skills has led to improvements in standards. Teaching assistants play a significant role in the good progress that pupils make. Teaching is usually lively, animated, highly challenging and expects pupils to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning. Occasionally, such qualities are not always present and pupils are a little passive in their learning. Good procedures are in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. The school has introduced a rigorous system for setting individual targets for pupils in reading and writing and plans are in hand to spread this good practice to mathematics and science. Marking of pupils' work is good, at times better, particularly in literacy, because it gives clear pointers for improvement which pupils say they find helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and adds to pupils' enjoyment of school. A good emphasis is given to the systematic development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and computer skills, although these are not always tested out in exciting and innovative curriculum or enterprise initiatives or projects. In the Foundation Stage a better balance is being struck between pupils learning through practical, hands-on activities and outdoor play, alongside the teaching of key skills. Good provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties, enabling them to make similar progress to their classmates. Older pupils learn French and the school is working well towards its target of all the pupils in Years 3 to 6 being given the opportunity to play a musical instrument. Given the small size of the school, it provides a good array of after-school clubs and brings in many visitors, particularly from different cultures and traditions that enrich pupils' learning. The school promotes healthy living and pupils' safety well and is examining further ways in which pupils and the local community can work together on different projects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care and guidance for pupils are good. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are well established and followed rigorously by staff. Pupils are safe and secure in school and feel that they have a voice that is listened to and respected. Pupils adamantly state, 'Bullying does not happen at our school because we are one big happy family.' They are also quick to point out that there is always an adult to talk to if they have any worries. Good support and guidance within school and the strong links that the school has established with outside support agencies means that help is readily on hand for pupils experiencing any learning, social or emotional difficulty. Although good procedures are in place for checking on pupils' academic progress, not enough is done to make pupils aware of their targets across different subjects and for pupils to play a part in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership and management of the school. She knows the school's strengths and weaknesses well and importantly, once weaknesses are identified, she puts in place strategies that bring results. For example, the raising writing standards and introducing good quality and stimulating well targeted intervention programmes have led to better pupil achievement. The school's self-evaluation is open, frank and accurate and takes on board the views of staff, governors, pupils and parents. The strong team spirit that the headteacher has nurtured means that all staff feel valued and are ready to play their part in constantly moving the school forward. The headteacher is well supported by the assistant headteacher and subject leaders, who together monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning well. However, regular analyses of pupils' work, to give a sharper insight into pupil achievement, do not always take place. Governance of the school is good. Governors are effective and influential in shaping the school's development through the support and challenge that they bring to its management.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	3
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	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	3
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?	2
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.

Annex A

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	2
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

21 March 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Benwick Primary School, High Street, Benwick, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 0XA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my two days at Benwick School. This letter is to tell you what I thought about your school and how it could be even better.

I had the chance to talk to lots of you, including some Year 6 pupils and all the members of the school council. It was good to hear that you really enjoy school, the after-school clubs and that bullying is not an issue at Benwick.

You will be pleased to hear that, like you, I think Benwick is a good school. Teaching is good and that helps to make sure that you make good progress and do well. Your headteacher runs the school well and together with all staff at the school makes sure that you are well looked after, are happy and safe and that you are encouraged to keep fit and healthy. An important strength of the school is you! You behave well, enjoy school and are respectful to all the adults and one another. I have made some suggestions as to how Ms Thomas and the staff can make the school an even better place for you to learn. I have asked teachers to keep on improving your writing skills and to provide more exciting and interesting ways in which your good English, mathematical and computer skills can be put to the test. I also think that you can play a part by always being active and enthusiastic learners, working hard at improving your work and being more involved in setting and reviewing your individual targets. Ms Thomas, the staff and the governors want the school to get better and better. Having met you, I am sure you do as well.

I wish you every success for your future. It was a pleasure to meet you.

Martin Newell

Lead Inspector