



The Beacon Infant and Nursery School, Bodmin

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111910
Local Authority Cornwall
Inspection number 289097
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Ian Hancock

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	38 Robartes Road
School category	Community		Bodmin
Age range of pupils	3–7		PL31 1JQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01208 72773
Number on roll (school)	183	Fax number	01208 72773
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ian Haspell
		Headteacher	Sally Buts
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2002		

Age group 3–7	Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007	Inspection number 289097
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Beacon Infant and Nursery School is an average-sized school in Bodmin. It serves an area in which there is much economic and social hardship, and a large proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above the national average. The school has a Child Development Centre for 12 pre-school children who attend on a part-time basis. There have been significant changes to staffing, including long-term absences of the headteacher, in the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' standards and achievement and the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1.

The school's effectiveness is unsatisfactory. The school has made insufficient improvement since the last inspection: standards have remained too low and the pupils do not make enough progress in Years 1 and 2. Significant staff changes, long absences of the headteacher and major building work have been factors affecting the school's rate of improvement, but the main reasons behind the lack of progress lie in weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning and in aspects of leadership and management. The school's leaders and governors failed to keep their eye on the ball whilst they oversaw the major building programme and did not check up enough on the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress. Staffing is now more stable and an established leadership team, which includes governors, is fully committed to raising the quality of teaching and learning. Leadership and management are now satisfactory. Although procedures to analyse assessment data, to monitor teaching and identify priorities for improvement are generally satisfactory, self-evaluation overall is not yet adequate. The school tends to overestimate how well it is doing because it does not focus sharply enough on keeping track of pupils' progress. Nevertheless, the action plan to raise standards is appropriate and some improvement in pupils' progress is evident. This, however, is not consistent across the classes. Training to enable senior leaders to undertake more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has started, but it is too early to see significant and consistent impact.

Standards and achievement are inadequate overall. Pupils start school with very limited skills and abilities. They get off to a sound start in the Foundation Stage because the provision is satisfactory. This steady progress is not maintained in Years 1 and 2. In these classes, teaching and learning are inadequate. As a result, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and standards in literacy and numeracy are well below average at the end of Year 2. In these classes, teachers have low expectations of what pupils can achieve and too often pupils are given undemanding tasks. The school has recognised that pupils' progress needs to be tracked more rigorously so that teachers can plan work better suited to the pupils' abilities, and has recently introduced new systems. These are not yet used consistently, but where they are used well, there are signs that teaching is improving and the work is now better matched to the pupils' needs and their progress is beginning to improve. The assessment data is not yet used well enough to guide pupils on what they need to do to improve their work.

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The school is a happy, harmonious and friendly place where pupils learn to respect each other. Behaviour is good because it is well managed. Although attendance rates are still below the national average, they have improved in the last year because of effective measures

taken by the school. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a good range of activities outside of the classroom, which are popular and well supported. The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory, with particular strengths in pastoral care and guidance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in literacy and numeracy by raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that work is accurately matched to the needs of all pupils so that they make good progress.
- Use assessment data rigorously to track pupils' progress, plan lessons and set challenging but realistic targets for learning.
- Improve the skills of the senior leadership team in the monitoring of teaching and learning and assessing the effectiveness of their actions on raising standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement and standards are inadequate. Many children start school in the Nursery with very low skills, particularly in speaking and listening and their personal and social skills. Whilst in the Nursery, children make satisfactory progress overall and good progress in their personal and social skills. When children enter the Reception classes, many still have very limited skills in all areas of learning, particularly in communication and language. Most children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, although by the end of the Reception year, standards are still below nationally expected levels.

In Key Stage 1, the national test results show a decline since the last inspection and the pupils' performances in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national figures in 2006. This is due in part to the turbulence the school has experienced with significant staff changes, including long-term absences of the headteacher and major building work. However, many pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, do not make sufficient progress as they move through the school. This is related to weaknesses in teaching where work is not always well matched to the needs of all pupils and often there is insufficient challenge. Recent initiatives to improve pupils' progress are beginning to have the desired effect. A scrutiny of pupils' exercise books shows that in some classes the work is now better matched to pupils' abilities and they are making more progress than previously. However, there is too much variability across the classes, and for many pupils progress is still insufficient. Pupils who are learning English for the first time make satisfactory progress in their language development due to appropriate individual support. Children in the Child Development Centre make good progress because staff understand these children's needs and plan appropriate activities to support their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, with a number of good features. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and are friendly and approachable. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, behave well and show respect for each other and the school environment. They are proud to be members of the school council and have been successful in bringing about improvements, for example, more equipment for the playground and different seating arrangements for lunch. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and maintain a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy exercise, including 'wake and shake', and regularly walk to school. Pupils are heavily involved in the local community, planting trees, participating in processions through the town and singing in the local carol service. They also contribute to the wider community by raising funds for children in India. Although the school actively promotes good attendance, this remains below the national average but has improved during the last year. Because pupils have not made enough progress in their academic work, they do not have the basic skills that are important for the future and the next stages of education and work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall, although in the Foundation Stage, teaching and learning are satisfactory and occasionally good. In Years 1 and 2, there are significant weaknesses in teaching that result in pupils not achieving as well as they should. Weaknesses in teaching during the inspection were also reflected in an analysis of pupils' work and in the school's assessment information, although a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there are improvements in pupils' rate of progress in some classes. Pupils are keen to work and classrooms are friendly places, but many teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They are not always given the right levels of work for their ability and too often pupils with different needs are doing the same work. Assessment information is not used effectively when planning lessons. Some support provided for pupils with significant learning or behavioural difficulties or in the early stages of learning English is good and parents appreciate this. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and its breadth has improved since the last inspection. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good balance of adult-led and play-based activities to ensure learning is fun and effective when children start school. In the rest of the school the curriculum provides a suitable range of activities, which are well

supported by extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the wide range of school clubs, including dance, sports, art and craft. The school has recently reviewed the curriculum, particularly in Years 1 and 2, to improve standards in English and mathematics but this has not yet had a significant impact on pupils' achievement. The increased accommodation in the school, with three spacious new classrooms, has a positive impact on the curriculum as it allows more opportunity for practical activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school shows a high level of care for all pupils' well-being, health and safety. This is greatly appreciated by parents. One comment was typical of many parents: 'The staff are very approachable and children's well-being and happiness are high on their list. The children feel safe in a happy environment.' Play leaders are available during lunchtimes to ensure pupils are actively engaged and developing their social and play skills well. All child protection, risk assessments and other procedures are fully in place and high priority is given to developing pupils' personal, social and health education. However, academic support and guidance for the pupils are not sufficiently well developed. Marking of pupils' work, the tracking of their progress and the use of data to set targets are not yet used consistently or effectively enough to raise standards or to help pupils know how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school have some strengths, and are satisfactory overall. The headteacher's vision of sustaining a caring school where pupils are keen to learn has been successfully achieved so that pupils want to come to school. Parents are very supportive and know that their children will be happy and safe in school. However, since the last inspection there have been indicators of widespread underachievement, particularly during the recent long-term absences of the headteacher. This is largely due to inadequate teaching and because monitoring and evaluation are not clearly focused on pupils' progress. Nevertheless, things are now improving; the senior leadership team has demonstrated that both staff and governors have the skills and drive to make necessary improvements. A detailed action plan has been produced to raise standards in literacy and numeracy through new tracking and assessment systems and increased monitoring and evaluation of teaching. It is too early to see the full impact of these initiatives but in some classes improvement is evident. The governors have a realistic understanding of where improvement is needed and are working with the school to implement the school's action plan.

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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?	4
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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?	3

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?	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	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your help you gave us when we visited your school. We felt very welcome at The Beacon Infant and Nursery School. If you remember, we came to look at all the work that you were doing and to talk to you and your teachers. We enjoyed meeting you and thought you were very friendly and well behaved. You like school and try to work hard for your teachers in lessons. You are helpful and kind to each other. We agree that you feel safe in school. Many interesting activities are organised for you to take part in, including many clubs, and you are learning to become fit and healthy. Your teachers have provided you with a caring school.

We also think there are some things the school could do better:

- Teach you to learn more quickly, especially in English and mathematics.
- Make sure that your work is not too hard or too easy so that your lessons become more interesting.
- Give you more advice about how you can improve your work.
- Give teachers some advice about how to teach you to learn more quickly.

Inspectors will be visiting again to see how the school is getting on with these things. We are sure you can do really well if you receive this help.