

Bishop Ian Ramsey CE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114254
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	289853
Inspection date	7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Dodd

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	138
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Watt Stelling
Headteacher	Mr Peter Boyle
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2002
School address	Manor Road Medomsley Consett County Durham DH8 6QN
Telephone number	01207 560235
Fax number	01207 560235

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	7 June 2007
Inspection number	289853

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Almost all the pupils attending this smaller than average sized village school are from White British families. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Children start school with skills which are broadly typical of children of their age. The school holds the Healthy Schools, ActiveMark Gold and ArtsMark accreditations. Although there are advanced plans for a new school building on the existing site, the timescale for completion is uncertain.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good school has an accurate view of its effectiveness and provides good value for money. It has some outstanding features. Pupils across the school, including children in the Foundation Stage, achieve well, and standards are above average by Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the excellent support they receive. This academic achievement, together with their good personal development, signposts a bright future for the pupils. Making sure that pupils enjoy learning, are safe and healthy, and play an active part in the school community are very high on the school's agenda. It is no surprise, therefore, that the school enjoys a good reputation in the community and parents are proud of their children's achievements.

Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching and learning and a particularly well enriched curriculum. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good but it is variable across the school. Pupils make the most rapid gains in their learning in Years 2 and 6, where exceptionally well-organised teachers provide very interesting and stimulating activities, set high expectations of their pupils and help them to understand how well they are getting on. As a result, these pupils show great enthusiasm, take a pride in their achievements and behave very well. These very best teaching practices, however, are not seen consistently across all classes. This sometimes results in learning that is uneven. Very careful adjustments to the curriculum are helping the school to tackle previous weaknesses in standards, particularly in pupils' writing. Significantly more pupils now reach a higher level than expected for their ages in writing than was previously the case. In information and communication technology (ICT), however, pupils' progress is not as good as it is in English, mathematics and science. This is because, despite very recent investments in resources, pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to practise their ICT skills across other subjects.

Key to the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher who, in pursuit of excellence, strives to ensure that every pupil achieves well in a very caring and supportive environment. In order to reach this goal, he has developed a well-focused plan that accurately pinpoints what needs to improve next. He ensures that there is a shared sense of common purpose amongst staff so that everyone works towards realising his vision with equal determination. The high priority placed upon the professional development of staff and governors is already paying dividends. They make an effective contribution to monitoring and evaluating the school's work and are keen to improve even further. This is why, at the same time as managing the additional demands arising from the uncertainties surrounding the proposed new building, the school continues to improve. Furthermore, there is no complacency but rather a shared determination to do even better. This, along with the good improvement since the previous inspection, demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve in the future.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that the most effective teaching and learning practices, particularly evident in Years 2 and 6, are seen consistently across all classes.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their ICT skills across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Girls and boys of all ages achieve well and standards are above average by Year 6. When children start in Reception, their skills are similar to those expected for their age, although there are significant differences from year to year. A strong focus on communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development ensures that children get off to a good start. By the time they enter Year 1, most attain the learning goals set nationally and some exceed them.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and reach above-average standards. As a result of swift and effective action, standards by Year 2 have risen sharply recently, especially in writing. Between Years 3 and 6, pupils make good progress. Although Year 6 pupils who took national tests in 2006 reached average standards overall, this represented good progress from their starting points. Furthermore, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the very effective support they receive in class and the wide range of programmes to boost learning. The school sets challenging learning targets for pupils and a greater proportion of this year's Year 6 pupils are working at above expected levels than in 2006, especially in English. Standards in ICT, although average, are not as high as they are in English, mathematics and science and pupils make satisfactory progress across the school. Pupils also achieve well in art and design and physical education due to the broad opportunities in the curriculum for them to practise their skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. The pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good behaviour and positive attitudes towards learning. From an early age, pupils develop a good understanding of appropriate ways to behave. There is little need for sanctions because pupils' achievements and successes are celebrated often and valued highly. Pupils say that this motivates them to work hard and try their best. Pupils have an excellent understanding of why it is important to eat sensibly and how to keep their bodies and minds healthy; for example, through peer massage sessions. Older pupils are wonderful role models for younger ones. They willingly take on responsibilities around school, such as looking after one another as 'buddies' and 'mediators'. They make a significant contribution to helping their school community become a happier and safer place to learn and have fun. However, the school has, rightly, identified that there remains scope for pupils to take on greater responsibility for their own learning and to develop greater independence at an even earlier age. Nevertheless, by Year 6, pupils are confident young adults well prepared for their future. Although attendance is satisfactory, it is improving as a result of the school's work with pupils and their parents.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching and learning. Enthusiastic teaching, purposeful and practical activities and positive relationships are strong features in most lessons. As a result, pupils are attentive, behave well and are open to learning. Teachers make good use

of the information they collect about what pupils already know to plan and provide work that accurately matches the varying ages and capabilities in each class, particularly in English and mathematics. Teachers deploy classroom assistants thoughtfully in order to boost the learning of those pupils who are capable of reaching a higher level of attainment. Particularly strong teaching in Years 2 and 6 makes a significant contribution to their rapid learning. In these classes, teachers are exceptionally well organised. Their expectations of the pace of learning, presentation of work and behaviour are consistently high. However, these practices are not applied consistently across the school, especially in Years 3 and 4, so some pupils do not make gains in their learning at as good a pace. Consequently, pupils' progress through the school is uneven.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils of all ages to make good progress overall. The school places a high priority upon providing an enriching and creative curriculum that enlivens learning. Parents say their children are 'really excited by the whole learning experience'. This is because of the wonderful range of interesting activities in and outside of lessons. The development of the outdoor learning environment, particularly the woodland area, makes a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment and their achievement - for example, in art and design, science and sport. Furthermore, pupils contribute extremely well to looking after and improving their school and they play a full and active role in village life. The curriculum is particularly well adapted to promote improved writing. For example, pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise their writing skills as part of work in other subjects. Developing children's literacy skills at an earlier age is also a priority in the Reception class. Although the school has recently improved resources to help with raising standards in ICT, pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to practise their ICT skills across other subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Parents are confident that their children are well cared for. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. Pupils say that there is always someone, adult or classmate, on hand to help them to overcome any difficulties, and so they feel safe in school. Well-trained classroom assistants, strong partnerships with external support agencies, regular communication with parents and sensitive programmes for supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensure that these pupils make outstanding gains in their learning. The school has rightly identified that the quality of academic guidance could improve further. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning targets with teachers are increasing. In Years 2 and 6, helpful marking and opportunities to talk about their progress ensure that pupils have a good understanding of how well they are getting on, especially in writing. Teachers, however, do not always apply these good practices consistently across all classes or all subjects of the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The caring and nurturing ethos that promotes good academic achievement and personal development underpins the school's good leadership, management and governance. The

leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He leads with clarity of vision and determination, so that everyone feels valued and works together to improve the quality of pupils' education. High on the agenda for improving the school is the proposed new building. The uncertainty about a completion date, however, presents additional challenges for leadership. In ICT, for example, resources need updating across the school. In order to minimise the impact of this on pupils' achievement, the school has purchased additional equipment. There remains more to do, however, in order to ensure that pupils make progress in ICT that matches their good progress in other subjects. Although presented with such problems, the headteacher, who is capably supported by the deputy headteacher, is not distracted. Consequently, the school has pinpointed the right priorities for moving forward and remains tightly focused upon them. Success is evident in the good improvements made since the previous inspection, particularly in standards and achievement, including writing. Parents have an overwhelmingly positive view of the school. They recognise and appreciate the improvements made. Although subject leaders and governors play an increased role in checking how well the school is doing, they know that there is scope to develop their skills even further.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

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	1

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	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	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

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishop Ian Ramsey CE Primary School, County Durham,

DH8 6QN

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You answered all my questions really thoughtfully. You were all very friendly and polite, your behaviour was good and you worked hard in lessons. I can see why you told me that you enjoy coming to school so much, and why your parents are proud of you and your school. All the adults care about you and want you to do well. I particularly enjoyed hearing how proud you are when you are praised for something that you have done well. It is also good to hear that, if you have any problems or are upset about anything, there is always an adult or a buddy or peer mediator on hand to help. You have many chances to take part in exciting activities in your lessons, after school and outside in the wonderful woodland area that you helped to develop. Also, it is good to hear that you know that the chances you get to give and receive massages at the start of your lessons help you to get ready for learning and keep you healthy.

Your school is a good school, you all do well in your learning and the school makes sure that you are well prepared for leaving at the end of Year 6. All the adults in your school work hard together to make things even better for you. I have asked them to make sure that:

- you learn just as quickly in all your lessons;
- you have lots more chances to practise your ICT skills in all your lessons, so that you do as well in this subject as you do in English, mathematics and science.

You can also help your school to become even better by making sure that you understand what your targets are and checking all the time what you have to do to reach them. Of course, please continue to try your very best in everything that you do.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Dodd

Lead Inspector