

Bentfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114978
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	290094
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Deane-Hall

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Allison Mansfield
Headteacher	Mr Patrick Draper
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Rainsford Road Stansted Mountfitchet Essex CM24 8DX
Telephone number	01279 813626
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a slightly smaller than average primary school serving an area of mainly owner occupied properties. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Most pupils are of White British background with a few of mixed heritage. Very few have English as an additional language. The school has enhanced provision for 15 pupils and currently has 12 with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is consequently high. When children enter Reception their skills and knowledge are broadly as expected for children of their age. The school is part of the Saffron Walden/ Stansted Mountfichet Federation of Schools. The governing body is registered for childcare provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness and value for money are satisfactory. Pupils' achievement is sound in relation to their starting points. Pupils and parents have positive views of the school and pupils enjoy attending. One parent said 'Bentfield has a warm and stimulating atmosphere.' Children in the nursery make good progress and achieve well. This flying start is maintained through Reception and continues in Years 1 and 2, so that standards are currently above average. National tests over the last few years show a steady rise in standards at Year 2. By Year 6 standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Progress in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall but is faster at the end of the key stage than at the beginning.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some good teaching when lessons are based upon recently developed systems for checking how well pupils are learning and what they need to do to improve. These systems have not yet been in place long enough to impact significantly on standards. There are some good examples of teachers' providing step by step guidance for pupils through their marking. However, this practice is not consistent. The school's systems for checking the quality of teaching show that lessons vary in quality. Teaching is better in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and in the middle and end of Key Stage 2. Here pupils make better progress than at the beginning of Key Stage 2. This is because lessons are more challenging, teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can do and work is more closely matched to pupil's needs.

The curriculum is good with a wide range of activities to help pupils learn. These include good opportunities for creative activity; for example, in art and design technology. The school has good procedures to support pupils who have had difficulties in other schools and many settle well. The support given to pupils with learning difficulties is good. The teaching of pupils in the 'enhanced provision' is extremely good. Consequently pupils with special needs make swift progress. Overall, care guidance and support for all pupils is of high quality and as a result pupils' personal development is good. Pupils show that they feel safe and secure in school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governing body has a realistic and accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what it needs to improve. However, the school has a slightly more positive view of how it is doing than the inspection evidence will support. This is because the school's self-evaluation process is relatively new and does not involve middle managers sufficiently in judging the school's performance. The school has successfully tackled most of the issues raised at the last inspection, ensured that senior management focuses on raising standards, adapted the building to improve the learning environment and enriched learning through the use of information and communication technology (ICT). It has also begun to develop a secure system for checking how well pupils are doing. The school recognises that pupils make slower progress in lower Key Stage 2 than in other parts of the school and is working hard to remedy this. Given the improvement since the last inspection and the commitment of staff and governors, the school is satisfactorily placed to continue improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of pace, expectations and challenge in teaching and ensure that all marking helps pupils to know how to improve their work
- Raise achievement by building on the developing systems for tracking how well pupils are doing and providing them with appropriate support and challenge

- Develop the role of the senior management team so that it plays a pivotal part in school improvement and strategic planning

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, achievement is satisfactory. The 2006 national test results show that pupils in Year 6 reached broadly average standards in English. In mathematics and science they were above average. Standards now, in the current Year 6 are above average for mathematics and science and there has been an improvement in English standards, with the result that they too are above average. The school recognises that girls do better than boys in writing and has worked successfully to narrow this gap. This is the result of the improved focus on tracking pupil's progress and ensuring that teaching matches their learning needs. Achievement and standards in the Foundation Stage are good. Many children enter the nursery with levels of development below those expected, especially in speech and language development. Outstanding teaching ensures that all children make good progress, particularly in personal, social and emotional development and in language development. In Reception, progress continues to be good as a result of good teaching and a rich curriculum.

Achievement and progress dip in Year 3 because expectations of what pupils can do are not sufficiently high and guidance to support future learning is not as effective as in other parts of the school. It picks up again as pupils move up through the school but, even so, is not always sufficient to ensure that pupils achieve as much as they could by the time they leave Year 6. Pupils who find learning difficult and those who have enhanced provision achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupil's personal development and well-being are good. This is because their awareness of moral and spiritual values is fostered well and they are sensitive to the feelings of others and the wonders of the world around them. Pupil's cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for social education is outstanding, with the result that pupils leave Bentfield as very sensible, sociable and well-adjusted young people, who are ready for the next phase in their education. One pupil remarked, 'We all treat each other the same', and this comment sums up the ethos of the school.

Pupil's behaviour is excellent, they are eager to learn, have positive attitudes and enjoy lessons. Given that a few pupils in the 'enhanced provision' sometimes need to be absent from school on medical grounds, attendance is good. Pupils have a particularly well developed understanding of how to keep safe because the school provides exceptional guidance. They also understand about healthy lifestyles and the benefits of exercise and good diet. Pupils are especially keen to take responsibility and many contribute to the school and the wider community through fund raising and charitable works. They collaborate well during group and partner tasks. The school council is effective and pupils appreciate the way any concerns they raise are dealt with.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory. It is good at Key Stage 1 and in the Foundation Stage. In the Nursery teaching is of a very high calibre because children are given opportunities to flourish in a stimulating environment where adult-led and child-initiated tasks provide exciting learning opportunities. At Key Stage 1, teachers provide practical activities which motivate pupils well. These teachers are skilled at understanding what pupils need to learn next and at helping them to do their best. At Key Stage 2, the best teaching moves lessons on briskly and pupils know what they are expected to learn. Teachers use a satisfactory range of methods to interest pupils. In lower Key Stage 2 classes, where teaching has some shortcomings, it is because teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and therefore do not always provide sufficient challenge. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupil's learning, particularly to that of any who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Some teachers set targets for learning, based on the use of newly introduced assessment strategies, but this practice is not consistent. Teachers' marking has developed and is becoming more focused on recognising success and identifying areas for improvement but, again, this practice is inconsistent. Teachers are increasingly using ICT to enrich pupil's learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities to help pupils learn in lessons and in after-school clubs. All those who want to take part in sport or other clubs are encouraged to do so at a level that is likely to ensure they meet with success. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and helps children to develop their skills and confidence in all areas of learning. The outdoor environment is used well providing a rich addition for learning opportunities. Activities in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 ensure that learning takes place through well-planned practical tasks. However, such opportunities are not so evident further up the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The correct procedures to ensure pupil's health, safety and welfare are in place. There is a very strong and highly effective commitment from all staff to the care and welfare of pupils. Consequently, the pastoral guidance and attention offered are outstanding. As a parent remarked, 'The school has a lovely, caring atmosphere.' A small but very significant number of pupils, who have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are given 'enhanced provision'. These pupils are extremely well supported by teachers and teaching assistants. High quality additional support for other pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities also has a positive impact on their learning. All adults know pupils well and provide satisfactory academic guidance. Recently considerable progress has been made in improving the tracking of pupil's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and committed senior management team. Together with the governing body, senior staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school is putting in place systems and support to improve achievement and standards. These are beginning to bear fruit at the end of Year 6. Tracking of pupil's progress is far more informed than previously and provides a clear insight into achievement. However, because they are relatively new, the effect of these improvement strategies has not yet had time to have a full impact on national test results. The governing body supports the school effectively and provides an increasingly level of challenge. The senior management team is beginning to clarify its role in relation to how it can support the school's future development. However, the school does not yet have a clear plan for bringing about further development and current planning lacks clear focus on how initiatives will improve pupils' learning. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and the 'enhanced provision' are very effective. Subject leaders are involved sufficiently on checking on the quality of teaching and learning.

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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?	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	2
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

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	3
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?	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	2
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

29 June 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Bentfield Primary School, Rainsford Road, Stansted Mountfichet, Essex CM24 8DX

Thank you for making us so welcome and helping us during the inspection. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking with so many of you. We know that many of your parents and carers are pleased with the education you receive. This letter is to tell you what we think of your school.

We think that your teachers want you to do well and make sure that you are well cared for. You behave very well and take care of one another. Younger children in the nursery and reception classes and in classes one and two are doing well. Many of you older children are learning a lot too. This is because your lessons are interesting and you have work which helps you to improve. We also think that, with help from your teachers, some of you can do even better. You told us that sometimes teachers tell you exactly what you need to do to improve your work but that this is not always the case. The teachers have good plans to make the school even better but sometimes the plans are not clear enough on how their actions will improve your learning.

To make your learning even better we have asked Mr Draper, the staff and the governors to do the following:

- Make sure that some of your lessons are even more interesting and challenging and to make sure that you always know precisely what to do to improve your work and reach your targets
- Make sure that the new systems to check how well you are doing are put in place across the whole school
- Make sure that those on the school's senior management team work even better together so that they are very clear about how their plans and actions will help you to learn better.

You can do your bit to help by making sure that you carry on working hard and thinking about what sort of things help you to learn in lessons, and telling your teachers about these.

Christopher Deane-Hall

Lead inspector