



Benhall Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115598
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290268
Inspection dates 13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector Alison Grainger

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Robert Burns Avenue
School category	Community		Benhall
Age range of pupils	4–7		Cheltenham GL51 6PS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01242 234717
Number on roll (school)	157	Fax number	01242 231977
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Alistair Seyers
		Headteacher	Wendy Richmond
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group 4–7	Inspection dates 13–14 March 2007	Inspection number 290268
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school draws its pupils from the surrounding estates of mixed housing. Almost all pupils are White British. No pupils from minority ethnic families are at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average, as is the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals. Taking the intake as a whole, children's attainment on entry to the Reception Year is above the level expected.

The school has the Artsmark Gold award and has recently gained Healthy Schools status. The present headteacher has been in post for two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that does some things well. Children are given a good start in the Reception Year, where provision meets their needs well, and this is much appreciated by parents. As one parent commented, reflecting the views of many, 'My son is thriving and has settled into the Reception Year brilliantly'. Children not only settle in quickly, but they also rapidly grow in confidence and reach standards that are well above the level expected by the time they transfer to Year 1.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This aspect is fostered particularly well in the Reception Year where children have extremely positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school a lot. Good attitudes and behaviour are maintained throughout Years 1 and 2. By Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. Their sensible behaviour and consideration for others do much to make the school a safe and calm environment.

In the school as a whole, achievement is satisfactory because teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Pupils progress at a reasonable rate through Years 1 and 2. At the end of Year 2, standards remain significantly above average. Even so, the more capable pupils are not challenged consistently in their daily school work. Standards of writing in pupils' books do not always reflect the high standards attained in the end of Year 2 assessments.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school knows improvements are necessary if pupils are to make good, rather than satisfactory, progress. The headteacher has a secure understanding of what needs to be done and has already started to take action. Work has begun to improve the use of assessment. The school is starting to track pupils' progress more rigorously. It knows that information gained from assessment needs to be used better to match teaching closely to pupils' needs and to give pupils guidance on how to improve their performance. Care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. There are some strengths in care for individuals.

The school is moving on at a satisfactory rate. The headteacher and governors recognise that if the pace of development is to accelerate, monitoring and evaluation of provision must focus more on the outcomes for pupils, particularly in terms of their progress. Self-evaluation is adequate but not incisive enough to promote change quickly. This is because the school has looked more at pupils' standards than at the value it adds when judging its effectiveness. The school has satisfactory capacity to make the necessary changes.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the more capable pupils are challenged consistently and that all pupils are pushed on well enough in writing.
- Make better use of assessment to track pupils' progress, guide them on how to improve their performance, and match teaching to their needs.
- Ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of provision focus sharply on the outcomes for pupils so that the pace of improvement increases.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are significantly above the national average. Children in the Reception Year make rapid progress across all areas of learning. They attain standards that are much higher than expected for their age.

The strong start in Reception is built on satisfactorily in Years 1 and 2. As a result, standards are still significantly above average in reading, writing and mathematics when pupils leave the school. Pupils also reach above average standards in art and design. They develop the skills expected in information and communication technology.

Although high standards are maintained throughout pupils' time in school, not all pupils do as well as they should all the time in lessons. The more capable pupils are not consistently expected to work at the higher level for their age. There are also times when pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not work at the level of which they are capable in writing. Pupils with learning difficulties move on at much the same rate as others in their classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception Year quickly learn the school routines and work and play together very amicably. They respond exceptionally well to the high expectations of their attitudes and behaviour, and gain independence well.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are sensible young people who want to learn. Although pupils of all ages enjoy school, the attendance rate is reduced by absences resulting from parents taking their children on holidays in term time. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community; for example, the School Council has helped with interviews for new staff. They gain a good awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves through raising funds for charities and through links with a school in The Gambia.

Moral and social development is particularly strong but spiritual and cultural development is not quite as well developed. Pupils' understanding of modern multi-ethnic society is a less secure area. Nevertheless, pupils' good personal attributes and competence in literacy and numeracy ensure that they are well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is good in the Reception Year and takes full account of children's needs. It is well focused and lessons proceed at a good pace, packing in a tremendous amount

of learning. Teachers are very clear about what they want children to learn and have high expectations of the standards that all are capable of reaching. Teamwork of teachers and teaching assistants is particularly strong.

There are some good features to the satisfactory teaching in Years 1 and 2. Positive relationships between adults and pupils create an atmosphere supportive of learning. The purpose of lessons and activities is clearly explained so that pupils know what is expected of them. Teaching of basic skills is accurate.

In Years 1 and 2, teaching is not always sufficiently well based on an assessment of pupils' needs. There is a tendency for teaching to be aimed at the middle ability in the class, with the result that the more capable ones are not consistently challenged. The pace of lessons is sometimes too slow, resulting in pupils marking time or losing concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Children in the Reception Year experience a stimulating and challenging range of activities. There is a good balance of adult-directed activities that, for example, promote the basics of literacy very well, and activities that allow children to explore and investigate independently. Action is being taken to develop the outdoor environment to strengthen the learning opportunities further.

Activities in Years 1 and 2 are appropriate for the age of the pupils. However, they do not always challenge the more capable ones fully or ensure that all do as well as they should in writing at length. Not enough attention is given to developing handwriting skills. Good opportunities for work in art and design reflect the award the school has received for good practice in this area. Opportunities for pupils to develop computer skills are satisfactory.

Pupils have access to a good variety of clubs. Visits and visitors help to bring learning to life. As one pupil in Year 2 said after visiting Chepstow Castle, 'It was great. We were dressed as knights with shields and swords and I learned a lot about the past'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff do much to ensure that pupils feel safe and confident at school. Arrangements for children starting in the Reception Year are good and enhanced by close links with the on-site Nursery. Parents say how much they value the 'warm, caring and supportive environment' and the welcome given to their children. Similarly, the school works closely with the junior school to help children move confidently on to Year 3. Pupils of all ages say that they feel safe at school. They are sure that they have an adult to whom they can turn should they have any worries.

The use of assessment to support and guide pupils is only just acceptable and is being developed. Steps are being taken to implement more rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. Marking and individual targets are starting to be used to tell pupils not only

what they are doing well but also how they can improve their performance. Guidance is not, however, closely matched to each pupil's needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a clear educational direction for the school. She knows its strengths and also recognises where improvements are required. The provision for Reception children is well led and managed. Coordination of other areas is not as strong but is moving on and is adequate overall. The English co-ordinator, for example, has already helped to improve provision and has a reasonable understanding of what needs to be done next.

Governance has developed well recently. Governors have become more actively involved in the school and are starting to ask critical questions to help the school to improve. The current pace of school improvement is insufficient to raise satisfactory provision to a level that is good. The headteacher and key governors understand that the checking of the school's effectiveness requires more rigour, particularly in analysing how the provision impacts on pupils' progress.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
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	3

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?	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and finding out about the school. The School Council members were particularly helpful.

We found that you are getting a satisfactory education. The children in Reception get off to a flying start. They settle in very well and make good progress.

In Years 1 and 2, teaching and the activities in different subjects help you to make satisfactory progress. You have a good range of clubs. You told us how much you enjoy the visits you go on. Year 2 pupils were really enthusiastic about the visit to Chepstow Castle.

You behave well, are sensible young people and enjoy school. The attendance rate does not show how much you like school because some of you miss lessons to go on holidays. You work and play together well.

The adults in school make sure that you are looked after properly. You told us that you know the adults will help you if you have any worries.

Your headteacher wants the school to be good at everything it does for you. To help with this, there are some things that we have asked the adults to give a lot of attention to. We have asked the adults to:

- make sure that the work is always hard enough for those of you who can do difficult work and give all of you help to develop your writing
- check your progress more carefully, help you know more about how to improve your work, and make sure that work is always at just the right level
- look more thoroughly at how well the teaching and activities are helping you to make progress.

Thank you once again for your help.