



Beechwood Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116087
Local Authority Southampton
Inspection number 290415
Inspection dates 22–23 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Laver

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Juniper Road
School category	Community		Bitterne
Age range of pupils	7–11		Southampton SO18 4EG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	023 8022 7692
Number on roll (school)	227	Fax number	023 8063 1148
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Angela Oliver
		Headteacher	Mrs Sue Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Beechwood Junior pupils come from a predominantly White British background. There is a higher than average intake of pupils with learning difficulties. The school has experienced a considerable decline in pupil numbers in recent years. The head teacher took over the leadership of the school in an acting capacity in January 2006 and has been substantive head teacher since June 2006. Many of the teaching staff have been appointed even more recently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Beechwood School provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. The school has recently emerged from a difficult phase characterised by underachievement and instability in staffing. The new leadership has had to radically restructure the school to take account of falling pupil numbers and deficiencies in several key areas of the school's provision. Achievement is now satisfactory. This improvement has resulted from rigorous monitoring of teaching and extensive support for teachers, including those recently appointed; plus a successful drive to improve behaviour, morale and teachers' expertise in assessing pupils' performance and using this information to raise expectations. Standards are currently close to average. Although improvements were not evident in the most recent Year 6 test results, progress is now very evident in classroom performance. The rate of improvement and the shared commitment to success show that the school has a good capacity to improve further. Pupils are now achieving their targets much better, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, more able pupils do not always get an appropriate match of work in lessons and consequently do not make as much progress as they should.

Pupils, staff, governors and parents all testify enthusiastically to the much improved ethos of the school. Much of the credit for this belongs to the head teacher, who is managing change very impressively, underpinned by accurate and thorough monitoring and evaluation. Staff greatly value the range and depth of support which is helping them to raise achievement and teaching to an acceptable level. Teachers also praise the head teacher for and;quot;managing us into responsibilityand;quot;. For example, teachers have developed an integrated curriculum which is appropriately rigorous but also imaginative and creative enough to enthuse both pupils and teachers. Teachers are also now more skilled and confident in assessing pupils' standards and progress, and in helping pupils reach their targets. However, marking does not consistently give pupils sufficient indication of how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. Although teaching has improved considerably, there are still inconsistencies in the match of work and pace of lessons.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved considerably as part of the turnaround in provision. Their moral and social development is particularly good, although pupils' awareness of other cultures is limited. Pupils value the good quality pastoral care, and they feel safe in school. However, improvements in their academic guidance are at an early stage.

Parents are rightly fulsome in their praise of recent improvements. They acknowledge and;quot;the fantastic opportunitiesand;quot; which the school now provides, the quality of the head teacher's leadership and the improved behaviour, although parents also recognise that the school can improve still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a better match of work to raise standards and improve achievement, particularly of more able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring better pace and questioning in lessons.
- Improve the quality of marking so that pupils have a clearer idea of how well they have done and how they can improve.
- Increase pupils' awareness of other cultures.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are close to average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils join the school with standards that are just below average and remain so broadly throughout their time in school. There was a significant decline in achievement of most pupils between 2004 and 2006, particularly in mathematics and English and among average and lower attaining pupils generally. School targets were not met. This was evident both from test results and from the school's own analysis of how well particular groups of pupils had made progress in developing core skills. This underachievement was due to weaknesses in areas such as the monitoring of teaching and the assessment of pupils' work. The head teacher and staff have worked hard and successfully to raise achievement over a short period of time. Achievement is now satisfactory, particularly in English and mathematics. This to a large extent reflects pupil and teacher enthusiasm for the topic based curriculum, which is now leading to satisfactory or better progress in lessons. It also reflects the new confidence of staff, their higher expectations and their ability to now assess pupils accurately. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls, and the small minority of pupils from ethnic backgrounds achieve at a similar level. Satisfactory progress is particularly evident in the current Years 3 and 6, with most pupils well on the way to reaching appropriately challenging targets. However, some higher attainers do not achieve as well as others, due to insufficient challenge. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress, especially when receiving specialist support in intervention programmes designed to raise achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well being are satisfactory overall, with some strengths. Pupils are friendly and polite and speak to adults confidently. Although pupils and parents still express some concerns about behaviour, pupils behaved well during the inspection and overall it is good. When unsatisfactory behaviour still occurs, it is now dealt with effectively. Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and speak enthusiastically about improved opportunities. They feel safe and know that there are adults they can go to if they are worried. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy through sensible eating and physical exercise. They are quick to mention

the 'fruit only' tuck, healthy lunches and the good range of after-school sports clubs. Moral and social development is good; spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils are kind and thoughtful towards each other and have a strong sense of fairness. However, they have a very limited understanding of the range of cultures in Britain. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as being school council members, peer mediators and manning the fruit stall. These experiences help to prepare them appropriately for adult life. They also enjoy supporting charities and activities such as the school choir.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Rigorous monitoring by the leadership has helped to improve teaching. Teachers manage most lessons well. The best lessons demonstrate high expectations of behaviour and a focus on practical activity. Pupils feel that their learning is improving from the way teachers now make lessons interesting through a topic based approach. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils weighed items needed for provisioning a Tudor warship they were studying in history. Pupils report that 'teachers make learning fun'. Consequently they behave well and are keen to learn. Occasionally in lessons teachers make good use of pupils' targets in order to help them improve their work. However, marking is inconsistent across the school and too rarely informs pupils about what precisely they must do to improve. Work is not always well matched to pupils' learning needs, which restricts progress, especially of the more able. Teachers' questioning does not fully extend pupils' ideas and skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Until recently it lacked a coherent structure and did not meet pupils' needs. The current leadership has made major changes, although some are recent, such as a full religious education programme. The school has adopted a very creative and imaginative approach to integrating various subject areas whilst retaining the rigour of National Curriculum objectives and assessment. Teachers and pupils are very enthusiastic about this approach - and;quot;learning is funand;quot; - and it is having a very positive impact on attitudes towards learning and achievement. Music is once again becoming a strength of the school. Pupils also respond well to the school's emphasis on promoting a healthy lifestyle. However, more able pupils are not always given sufficient challenge in lessons. There is a good range of clubs and activities outside lessons, including various sports and the choir, and these have a good take up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for its pupils. Pastoral support is good and contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and well being. Parents are very appreciative of this. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety, including child protection, are securely established. Pupils' involvement in anti-bullying measures has been a successful initiative, ensuring that they feel much safer in school. The school provides outstanding care for its more vulnerable pupils through initiatives such as the Learning Zone. Here they are gently and calmly supported in order to moderate their behaviour, and they learn to work with others. Effective use of support services and strong links fostered with local schools also contribute to good care. However, academic monitoring and support are much less developed, and until recently have had little impact upon progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head teacher provides very clear direction and a vision of improvement shared by all staff. The leadership's monitoring and evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses are accurate and thorough. The head teacher and deputy have begun to address the weaknesses successfully, particularly through the provision of a stimulating curriculum which has stimulated pupils' enthusiasm for learning; and by improving achievement, particularly through monitoring teaching and developing accurate assessment. Leadership and management structures at a lower level are only beginning to emerge, because the school has a committed but mostly inexperienced staff. However, these staff are benefiting from very good professional development and are keen to develop a leadership role. Governors are now more effective in holding the school to account and have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses than was the case until recently. Together, governors and staff have coped well with declining pupil numbers. There are good links with outside specialist agencies, providing support for vulnerable pupils, and also with other local schools. These have led, for example, to joint training opportunities and the opportunity to use a wider range of specialist facilities. Beechwood is an inclusive, caring school, although not all pupils yet reach their academic potential.

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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?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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 welcoming us so enthusiastically to your school. You gave us a lot of helpful information and we enjoyed finding out what you thought about your school.

Your school provides a satisfactory standard of education. It has improved considerably, particularly since your new head teacher arrived. She leads the school very well. One of you told us, and;quot;Everything is brilliant nowand;quot;. Before that there were many problems in the school, but with your help, it is getting better all the time. We know that you are well looked after in school and are now more enthusiastic about what you do in lessons. We also know that you now behave better most of the time, and feel safe. You have several new teachers, who are working hard to help you do even better, and many of you are now making better progress. We were particularly impressed by how well some of you are looked after in the Learning Zone.

Although we liked many things about your school, we have asked your teachers to help you achieve even more. We want them to sometimes give you more challenging work in lessons, which some of you find too easy at the moment. We have asked teachers to give you more information in your workbooks on how well you have done and how you can do even better. We have also asked them to help you understand even better how people from other backgrounds live differently from yourselves, and what they believe in.

Once again, thank you for making our visit so interesting.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Laver

Lead Inspector