

Bitterne Park Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116090
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	290416
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Julia Lury
Headteacher	Mrs Ceinwen Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Manor Farm Road Southampton SO18 1NX
Telephone number	023 8055 4541
Fax number	023 8067 9289

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large junior school serves an urban community on the east side of Southampton. Around ten per cent of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and have English as an additional language. A few pupils are in the early stages of acquiring English. Pupils' attainment as they enter the school is typical of the age group. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average. Six pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is a little above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bitterne Park Junior School is a good school with outstanding features where pupils achieve well and reach above average standards. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their education. This is evident in their good attendance and endorsed by parents, who are very supportive of the school. Many agree with the view that, 'There is an atmosphere of care and commitment to the children'. Pupils' outstanding personal development is reflected in their high levels of self-discipline and their positive attitudes. The quality of teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. As a result, pupils are well motivated and make good progress, especially in Years 5 and 6. The drive to improve standards in writing has paid dividends. This is evident in the collection of poems published by the school entitled 'Ladies We Love'. Typical of the many well-written pieces is:

To the lady I love...My Mum

You're the topping, The rhythm to this love song...

You're the flame to my fire. The love of my soul,

And without you there is no me! (Year 6 pupil)

Standards in English, mathematics and science are generally above average, although pupils do not make as good progress in mathematics as in the other subjects. The school is introducing some promising strategies to ensure progress in mathematics is consistent across the school, as there had been some underachievement in Years 3 and 4 in previous years.

The outstanding curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of opportunities in art, sports and other events, both in and out of school, that contribute to pupils' enjoyment. Pupils with severe learning difficulties or physical impairments take a full part in curriculum activities through sensitive support from adults and the provision of teaching aides, such as an individual computer screen. The care, support and guidance provided for pupils are good. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure that all individuals feel safe, adopt safe practices and know that someone will help them if there is a problem. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community through the school and class councils and play an active part in local democratic processes such as the Youth Council.

Senior staff are committed to raising standards and teamwork is strong. The headteacher, ably assisted by the assistant headteacher, provides clear and determined leadership. They support and encourage the rest of the management team to develop their own ideas, and to contribute to whole school development and to self-evaluation. Governors work effectively in support of the school. There is a wealth of assessment data but the information this provides is not always summarised clearly enough for staff and governors to monitor the progress of different groups of pupils. Since the last inspection, standards have risen considerably, teaching has improved and pupils continue to enjoy learning. Good leadership and management mean that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics to match more closely that in English and science.
- Provide clear information for staff and governors about the rate of progress of different groups of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Due to effective teaching and the stimulating curriculum, pupils achieve well throughout the school and reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. The school sets challenging targets, which most pupils achieve. Parents appreciate this; as one remarked, 'The school is inclusive and supports pupils across the ability range'. Teachers ensure that the more able pupils are suitably challenged and, in 2007, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in English and science was significantly higher than average. It was above average in mathematics. However, in each year group, fewer pupils achieve their expected targets in mathematics compared to English or science, and this is a school priority. Pupils with learning difficulties, sensory or physical needs also make good progress because their work is suitably challenging and they receive well-targeted support. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their classmates. Those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make good headway and are increasingly able to take a full part in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, are outstanding. During an assembly, for example, pupils were highly attentive and responded positively to issues regarding different cultural backgrounds and of the importance of being part of a tolerant society. Pupils enjoy school; they feel safe and know the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. They have very positive attitudes and are increasingly independent learners. Almost all pupils behave well both within and beyond the classroom and are courteous. Pupils contribute very well to the community, both within the school and more widely. Three Year 6 pupils led a class council meeting extremely maturely and their classmates contributed ideas very sensibly. By the time they leave, pupils are equipped with good skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) to help them move on confidently to their secondary education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lively teaching in each year group promotes good learning. Teachers plan thoroughly, use questioning skills very effectively, and share with pupils what they are expected to learn. Outstanding teaching across Year 6 fully absorbs and challenges pupils, and accounts for the acceleration of progress in this year group. Across the school, most lessons run smoothly because teachers are good at motivating pupils. There are a few exceptions, where minor disruptions and general noise levels limit progress. Occasionally introductions to lessons are a little long, leaving too little time for pupils to work independently. The overall quality of teaching is good, however. Teachers ensure that pupils of all abilities are suitably challenged. The skilful use of interactive white boards enlivens many lessons. This provides pupils with good visual prompts and sustains their interest. Teachers mark work constructively and make every effort to help pupils reflect on their own learning. For example, many pupils' books include useful written dialogue between teachers and pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Children find the curriculum exciting and one pupil explained that 'we have a creative curriculum to make learning fun'. There are frequent links between subjects. During work linking history and English, for example, Year 6 pupils practised writing complex sentences as they wrote applications to be 'curator of the Museum of Ancient Egypt'. Pupils have good opportunities to investigate a range of cultures from all parts of the world; for example, the 'Journey to Jo'burg' topic in Year 5 includes moral and social implications for oppressed and disadvantaged people. Extensive enrichment opportunities include the school orchestra, a debating club and dance. Many sporting activities complement the school's commitment to the healthy schools initiative. The extensive range of visits and visitors enrich pupils' learning. Pupils talked enthusiastically about a talk by an Egyptologist. Pupils benefit from a number of opportunities to develop enterprise capability and economic understanding through activities such as taking complete responsibility for an ICT day to raise money for extra resources.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Secure and effective systems ensure pupils' safety and to promote their well-being. The school effectively encourages pupils to become independent and reflective learners. For example, the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme enables pupils to talk about and understand their feelings and the impact of their actions. A 'nurture group' provides very good support for pupils experiencing emotional difficulties, and there is support for the recently bereaved. An innovative feature is the 'girls' night out', when the assistant head invites girls and their mothers to a discussion about puberty followed by a meal at a local restaurant for the adults involved. Older pupils know their learning targets and understand what they need to do to improve. One remarked, 'To move up a level, I need to write sentences with more clauses and use interesting connectives'. However, some younger pupils are not aware of their targets and the next steps in learning. Pupils who need extra help in literacy and numeracy are well supported through a good range of intervention programmes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and all staff place great store in promoting pupils' personal development and this is reflected in pupils' overall happiness, excellent behaviour and relationships. Everyone is playing a valuable part in moving the school forward. A strong focus on raising standards is illustrated by the significant improvements since the last inspection. Standards have risen from well below average to above average. Self-evaluation, involving staff, parents, governors and pupils is good. Senior staff are developing a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Mathematics is identified as an area for improvement and the new subject leader has introduced some effective strategies for raising achievement. Governors are well informed and provide good support and challenge to the school. However, assessment data is not always presented clearly enough to help governors and staff to see the rates of progress of different groups, such as pupils receiving extra support.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

14 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bitterne Park Junior School, Southampton, SO18 1NX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and were very impressed by your excellent behaviour, good manners and friendliness. We judged the school to be good overall with some outstanding aspects.

We saw that your teachers work very hard to make sure that your lessons are fun and that you enjoy school. The work that you do is of a good standard and you clearly try your best. We were particularly impressed by your good speaking and listening skills and your written work. You must be very proud of the 'Ladies We Love' poetry collection. We certainly enjoyed reading it. It was good to see how hard you are working in mathematics because in recent years you have not done so well in this subject as in English and science. We agree with the school that special attention should be given to helping you do better in mathematics.

What a lot of interesting things you do in lessons and after school! You told us how much you enjoy working on topics that cover different subjects. This gives you more opportunities to practise your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. We saw a good example of this in Year 6 where the children were trying to use interesting connectives in their writing about Ancient Egypt. Considering your understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and keeping fit, and by your care in re-cycling materials, we could see why the school achieved the National Healthy Schools award.

The school is well led and managed and everyone who works there is keen that you all do your very best. The headteacher and teachers check your work regularly so that they can give you extra help. We have suggested that the records of your progress should be made clearer so everyone can see at a glance where you are doing well and where you might be falling behind.

We wish you well for the future and hope that you all have a happy Christmas.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Crompton

Lead Inspector