

Bitterley CofE Primary School (Aided)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123535
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	292702
Inspection date	13 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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	
School	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Thyrle Bird
Headteacher	Jane Bishop
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2002
School address	Bitterley Ludlow SY8 3HF
Telephone number	01584 890228
Fax number	01584 891572

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	13 March 2007
Inspection number	292702

© 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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bitterley is a small primary school, with pupils from a wide mix of social backgrounds. Almost all pupils are from White British origins, with very few from other ethnic groups. A small minority have a variety of learning difficulties, predominantly in the area of speech and language. There is an independent pre-school on site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bitterley is a good, effective and very happy school which is led and managed well. Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding, resulting from an excellent curriculum and good care, guidance and support. Pupils' mature, responsible attitudes and excellent behaviour lead to a highly purposeful and vibrant school community in which pupils play a significant part. A well-organised Reception class means that pupils make good progress and achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Pupils enter the school with standards just above average and, by the time they leave, standards are significantly above national averages. By the age of seven, reading development is outstanding and roughly half of all pupils reach the very highest levels by the age of eleven. This good progress and achievement is found in all age groups. This is due to consistently good quality teaching and careful assessment to build on learning from lesson to lesson. Pupils' skills and the progress they make in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory rather than good, because the technology has only recently improved from a low baseline. The curriculum offers a wealth of activities and this, alongside strong links with other organisations, helps pupils to become well-rounded people who are keen to do well. They have an extensive knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy. For example, pupils always choose platefuls of fruit, vegetables and salad to eat with their lunch. The very rich array of well-planned activities and high quality support for pupils' personal development means that they have a good range of skills to prepare them well for their future, especially the ability to work in teams and to use their own initiative. Pupils enjoy school enormously, which parents appreciate very much; as one typically wrote, 'What more can a parent ask for?' Although most pupils make good progress, they do not have sufficiently detailed individual targets. As a result, pupils are not clear about what they need to do personally to improve, making it difficult for a few of them to reach the high expectations set by the school. Nevertheless, school leaders, through good self-evaluation, have secured good quality achievement every year and standards are still improving. Governors are involved well with the school and bring a wide range of skills to their work. However, their role in monitoring how well pupils are doing and in holding the school to account for results is underdeveloped.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' ICT skills to bring their achievements in line with those in literacy and numeracy.
- Give pupils more precise individual targets and make sure that they know what they must do to reach them.
- Ensure that governors improve their skills in checking and challenging the school's performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

School leaders and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are equally keen to do well. Consequently, pupils in all classes achieve well. Children make good progress in their Reception year and when pupils enter Year 1 the standards of their work are just above average. Pupils' positive attitudes and detailed planning at all levels mean that by the time pupils leave, standards are usually significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties also achieve well and make good progress in developing their language and communication skills. Recent and successful focus on reading

is the reason why the younger pupils' achievements in reading are outstanding. An exceptionally well-organised curriculum means that, despite learning in mixed-age classes, by the age of eleven about half of all pupils reach the highest levels, with others usually close behind. For a small number of pupils their progress in writing and mathematics is satisfactory rather than good, largely because their targets are not precise enough for teachers to always match work sufficiently well to their needs. Although standards and achievement in ICT are satisfactory overall, pupils' ICT skills are progressing well in the oldest class because the teaching is strong.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is demonstrated by their exemplary social skills. Pupils are always helping each other in class or acting as 'buddies' to sort out minor incidents. They also show an interest in such things as current events, music, art and dance when chatting to visitors. Pupils are very thoughtful about their lives and the differences in the lives of others. They have a strong moral sense, behaving excellently and helping to develop and revise the rules for behaviour. They advocate 'a zero-tolerance policy' on misbehaviour and cannot recall any bullying. Pupils make a key, high quality contribution to the daily life of the school and wider community, linking with community activities and even managing their own class budgets. Pupils enjoy school enormously and attendance is well above average. They join in enthusiastically with the many imaginative opportunities to keep healthy through exercise and sport. They are exceptionally well aware of the need for safety and security. In physical education lessons, for example, they check the hall for hazards. All these skills alongside good basic skills ensure that pupils are well prepared for a bright future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have been consistently good in all age groups, over some considerable time, because of careful and effective leadership and excellent teamwork by a close-knit staff. All lessons are typified by excellent relationships and behaviour and a good pace and sense of purpose. The lessons are planned well, based upon careful assessment and good knowledge of the strategies needed for many different subjects. In this environment pupils thrive and really enjoy the way, to quote one pupil, 'Teachers let us try things out for ourselves.' In fact the encouragement of teamwork and independent learning is very effective. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the good learning taking place and are very well managed. Teachers do not give pupils individual targets to work towards and this is the main reason for a few pupils making satisfactory rather than good progress. Teachers assess and plan work well on a day-to-day basis, which is why most pupils do make good progress. Teachers' skills in promoting ICT are still developing and therefore pupils' progress is satisfactory overall in this subject.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very well organised to ensure that the different ages and abilities in each class make good progress. Opportunities for supporting literacy and numeracy are planned well in all subjects and in the Foundation Stage. The curriculum for ICT is now good and improving.

The wealth of opportunities provided to help pupils develop personally is outstanding and parents are very appreciative. For example, pupils are actively encouraged to develop their different interests, such as crafts, music or gardening. There are numerous activities and visits to bring learning to life, and to strengthen pupils' ability to contribute to the community and prepare for their futures. An excellent recent history project was particularly successful in helping pupils to appreciate how old and significant their school is locally and nationally. The substantial links with others to ensure that pupils are strongly committed to leading healthy and safe lives are typified by the exceptional school lunches, one pupil reporting that 'All the meals are lovely and good for you.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There are very thorough arrangements to safeguard pupils. Pupils are well aware of this, one announcing that 'We know that they are capable if we fall over.' This helps build their very strong sense of caring concern. There is outstanding support for pupils' personal development, especially those who are vulnerable, through good quality links with other agencies, a sensitive awareness of pupils' needs and clear guidelines. There is thorough preparation to make sure that pupils do well when entering and leaving the school. Pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve their work through careful marking and discussions in lessons. This helps pupils to reach the challenging end-of-year goals set for them by the teachers. However, pupils are not routinely given individual short-term targets to aim for. This slows learning for a few.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders and staff have a strong and unwavering commitment to keep standards high and give pupils a well-balanced, enjoyable school experience. Good self-evaluation, checking carefully to see how well pupils are doing and consulting widely with others, including parents and pupils, has led to many ongoing improvements to pupils' achievements, and especially their personal development. Most recently these have been to pupils' skills and confidence in group discussion, which in turn have helped to improve writing and reading. Standards have been rising following better target setting, especially in Years 3 to 6, as well as in problem solving in mathematics and ICT. The capacity to improve is therefore good. Senior leaders have not, until recently, monitored pupils' progress towards their targets frequently enough to be able to intervene earlier and so raise standards further. This shortcoming has been recognised and work to address it is well underway. Governors bring many strengths to support the school, but their role in looking at pupils' achievements and holding the school to account is more limited.

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

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	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 behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	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 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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so welcoming to us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

We found your school to be successful, well run and very caring. It is a good school, just like you told us. It helps all of you to make good progress in your lessons, and to make excellent progress in your social and personal skills. Your headteacher and senior staff do a good job in seeing that you all do well and that the school keeps improving. We would like them to make your targets more individual so that you will know what you have to do to improve and learn even more. You are very responsible, hard working and excellently behaved. Your teachers and teaching assistants are very skilled at helping you to do your best and teach you well. The way you work together and care for one another is excellent and you clearly enjoy coming to school. We think that this, alongside your good skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, will stand you in very good stead for your next school and future lives.

We were pleased to see that you take plenty of exercise and eat such a healthy diet. Your school lunches are the best we have seen. Your teachers see to it that you have an excellent range of subjects, activities and links to other schools to help you learn well and prepare for your next school. The school is very good at keeping you safe and at helping you to become mature, well-rounded people. It also cares for and guides you well to do your best. We have asked your school to help you learn more skills in ICT. We would also like to see your governors do more to check and challenge senior staff about how well you are doing.

We are impressed with the way you contribute to the school, especially the humorous and mature way that you answer the phone and talk to visitors. We wish you all the very best in the future.