



Bowerhill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126290
Local Authority Wiltshire
Inspection number 293510
Inspection dates 7–8 November 2006
Reporting inspector Diane Wilkinson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Halifax Road
School category	Community		Bowerhill
Age range of pupils	4–11		Melksham SN12 6YH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01225 700964
Number on roll (school)	368	Fax number	01225 350036
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Timothy Merrett
		Headteacher	Andrew Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bowerhill is a large primary school. Most pupils are from a White British background and speak English fluently. Attainment on entry is around that usually found. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is around average, but varies significantly between year groups. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bowerhill is a satisfactory and improving school with strengths in some areas of its work. In particular, the positive ethos, good pastoral care and support and an interesting and rich curriculum result in pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils enjoy school and are confident that it is a safe and supportive place to be. Parents appreciate the support their children are given. Behaviour and relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils develop maturity and confidence and gain a good understanding of how to look after themselves. They enjoy the way the school consults with them and involves them in planning improvements, for example, to the playground.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Effective systems to check on the quality of teaching and pupils' performance means that the school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing and is correctly identifying and addressing areas of weakness. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress have improved, albeit slowly. Better planning to support pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, improved activities for higher-attaining pupils and well-targeted support for pupils who need extra help have steadily brought about better progress in writing and mathematics. The school recognises that pupils do not have enough opportunities for mathematical problem solving. However, the school development plan does not always focus precisely on how pupils' learning can be improved or on how to judge the success of its strategies. This, together with the fact that not all subject leaders are skilled in monitoring the progress of developments, has resulted in the rate of improvement being slower than it could have been. Governors are supportive and recognise they need to increase their role in helping to keep a check on school development.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and ensure that throughout the school pupils achieve satisfactorily and attain average standards. In Years 5 and 6, particularly effective teaching has resulted in pupils making up for slower progress made in the past. In these classes, teachers keep a careful check on how well individual pupils are doing and adjust lesson activities accordingly, constantly showing pupils how they can improve and do even better. However, in other year groups teachers do not always give pupils enough advice on how to improve their work. The school tracks pupils' progress well and uses this information effectively to set individual pupils targets for improvement. However, not all teachers use these in a manner that encourages progress. This means that academic support and guidance and the overall level of care, support and guidance are satisfactory.

The good curriculum provides interesting activities successfully enriched by extra experiences, such as learning French, which enthuse and motivate pupils. It is well planned to make effective links between different subjects which are relevant to pupils' needs and interests. Improved accommodation has significantly enhanced the learning environment and improved the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen school development by giving more emphasis to the way pupils learn and increasing the monitoring skills of subject leaders.
- Improve the quality of marking and feedback so that pupils have a better understanding of how well they are meeting their targets.
- Increase the rate of progress in mathematics by ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to use their skills in solving mathematical problems.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the Reception class with standards around those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress and standards on entry to Year 1 are in line with expectations, although lower in writing and some key mathematical skills. They are good in personal and social development. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory. Standards are average in reading and also in writing, where progress has improved across the school. Standards are slightly lower than average in mathematics owing to pupils' lower calculation skills when they started Year 1. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is steady. Although it is now satisfactory, in the past, progress in Years 3 and 4 has been too slow, but pupils have made up lost ground as a result of good teaching in Years 5 and 6. By the time pupils leave the school, standards in English, mathematics and science are average. This is an improvement on the below-average test results for mathematics seen in the last two years, when the school was not reaching the challenging targets set.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above average as a result. The school is a sea of happy smiling faces and pupils say they like lessons, especially when teachers 'make learning fun'. Children in Reception make particularly good progress in their personal development. Throughout the school pupils behave well. They are confident that they can approach staff if they are unhappy. They say there is the usual 'rough and tumble' and some 'name calling', but are very clear that this is dealt with quickly. Pupils are articulate and think sensibly about the world around them. As a result, spiritual, social and moral development is good and pupils' awareness of how to make safe and sensible decisions, such as why they shouldn't talk to strangers, is good. They are proud of the Healthy Schools Award and recognise the importance of healthy eating to help 'keep up their energy'. Pupils are soundly prepared for future life and there is a good community spirit. The school council provides good opportunities for decision making. Pupils enjoyed helping raise funds for a 'buddy bench', but would welcome more opportunities to take responsibility. Pupils' understanding of their own cultural heritage is good, although they are less knowledgeable about other cultures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has successfully addressed weaknesses in teaching seen in previous years which contributed to the slow progress in writing and mathematics. Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in their written work which, together with well-focused activities, has ensured that progress in writing is satisfactory. Methods of calculation in mathematics are well taught so pupils make good progress in this aspect and the school is aware that pupils need more opportunities to use their skills in solving mathematical problems. Higher-attaining pupils are now set challenging work which allows them to make better progress than in the past. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is constantly adapted to meet the emerging needs of pupils so that all pupils are continually challenged to do their best. In these year groups marking is good but in other year groups marking, whilst satisfactory, does not give pupils enough guidance on how they can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy the good curriculum. Well-planned programmes of work exploit links between subjects making learning more interesting. Literacy and numeracy planning is good, although pupils need more opportunities to use their numeracy skills. Provision for ICT has much improved since the conclusion of building works. The Reception curriculum is satisfactory with plans to improve children's outdoor activities. Teachers plan carefully to provide interesting challenges for higher-attaining pupils. Those whose progress slows receive effectively targeted support. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported by practical and realistic individual education plans. The curriculum is enriched well by visiting teachers, for example, for French, and a range of clubs, mainly for sporting activities. The good personal, social and health education programme effectively promotes pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Academic support and guidance is satisfactory. The school collects good information on how well pupils are doing which is effectively used to set targets to help them improve. However, not all teachers make the most of the targets by referring to them in lessons or when marking pupils' work. This diminishes the impact they might make on improving progress.

Good pastoral care and guidance results in pupils feeling safe and happy in school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are rigorous. Supervision at playtimes is very thorough which, together with the very good range of activities provided, helps make them harmonious occasions. Effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and relationships support good personal development. Pupils with learning difficulties and

disabilities or other needs are well supported and consequently develop confidence and self-esteem.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Sensitive leadership has successfully developed a positive climate for learning where everyone feels well cared for and supported. Finances are well managed and have ensured that accommodation and resources have improved considerably. These improvements have had an impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour, both of which have improved and pupils say they 'love the new classrooms and computer suite'. The school has an accurate picture of how well it is doing. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have helped improve progress and the robust system for analysing performance data is helping senior managers target support where it is needed. However, although the school development plan is targeted at the right areas, such as improving attainment in mathematics, the actions planned are not always focused sufficiently on improving pupils' learning and do not define how success will be judged precisely enough. As a result, some actions taken have been slow to address weaknesses. A number of subject leaders are new to their role and some do not yet have the necessary skills to monitor the success of the school's strategies to improve teaching and learning. Governance is satisfactory and governors recognise the need to increase their role in helping to keep a check on how well the school is doing.

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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	3
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	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	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?	2
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 to your school and being so friendly and helpful, particularly the school council who gave up their lunch time to speak with us. You and your parents think that your school is a safe and happy place to be and we agree with you. We think the standard of education is satisfactory and you make satisfactory progress, but there are a lot of good things going on and these are the best ones:

- You enjoy school, behave well and get on well with your teachers and other children.
- You enjoy helping staff improve your school, especially planning things for the playground and you are keen to help even more.
- You are developing a good understanding of how to look after yourselves.
- The activities planned for you are interesting and varied. You have lots of clubs for sport and you do extra things like learning French.
- Adults look after you well and give you good support for your personal development.
- Children in Years 5 and 6 are well taught and make good progress.

Your headteacher and staff have helped you make better progress in writing and mathematics. We think these are the things they should do now to improve your progress.

- Help you make even better progress in mathematics by giving you more opportunities to use your skills in solving problems. You can help by thinking very carefully about what kind of sum you would need to do.
- Make sure teachers show you how you can improve your work and help you to reach the targets they have set you. You can help by taking good account of their advice.
- Make sure that when managers and governors devise plans to improve things they make it clear how these can improve your progress.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.