

# Bowhill Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 134174         |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Devon          |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 294115         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 9–10 July 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Terry Elston   |

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

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|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary                                       |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                                     |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 401   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                            |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Reg Edwardson                                 |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Bobby Sutton                                  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | Not previously inspected                      |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Buddle Lane<br>St Thomas<br>Exeter<br>EX4 1JT |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01392 206585                                  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01392 206584                                  |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school opened in September 2005 following the amalgamation of a first and middle school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is higher than that found in most schools. Many of their difficulties are to do with speech and communication. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school has recently gained 'Investors in People' status and the 'Healthy Schools' award. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average and a significant proportion has weak language skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school that serves its community well. Pupils achieve well and make good progress because of the consistently good teaching. Children make a good start in the Reception class and continue to do well throughout the school. As a result, by the time they leave, overall standards are securely in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science. In writing, progress, although satisfactory, is slower than other aspects of English. This is particularly the case with boys, who sometimes find writing tedious. Otherwise, pupils enjoy school and their personal development and well-being are good. They behave well, show a great pride in their school and take good advantage of the excellent facilities for sport, music and art and design. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to live healthy lives and feel safe because of the good quality of the care, support and guidance. Adults know the pupils well and make sure that those who have concerns have all the support they need.

Pupils speak highly of the good, well-planned curriculum that is enriched by many popular activities at lunchtime and after school. The curriculum does not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing, although it focuses well on all other aspects of literacy and numeracy. The very good emphasis on developing pupils' creative skills explains why they produce such exciting pictures in art and design lessons and perform so well in dramatic productions. Their 'Wizard of Oz' was a triumph.

These strengths in the provision are made possible by good leadership and management. The school is led well by a strong headteacher who has done well to merge the staff of two schools into an effective team. One parent's views are typical of many when writing, 'Staff from the two schools have combined brilliantly to make this a place with such a caring and supportive atmosphere.' Other senior leaders make effective contributions, and they show a good commitment to the raising of standards. The school rightly has the development of the role of subject leaders as its next priority. While they support other staff well, they are not all at the stage where they monitor and evaluate the teaching and pupils' standards with sufficient rigour to raise standards further. Governors provide sound support and guidance to the school.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for pupils, particularly boys, to improve their writing skills.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to enable them to raise standards further in their subjects.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards are average, overall, and pupils achieve well. Children in the Reception classes make a good start to school and achieve well. They do particularly well in their speaking, reading, mathematical and creative skills and nearly all meet the expected goals by the end of the year in all areas. Standards attained by Year 2 pupils are average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. These results show good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, where they are significantly higher than in 2006.

By Year 6, pupils continue to achieve well and the standards they reach are close to the national average. The school's tracking shows they have made good progress in the two years they have been here. In writing, while pupils make satisfactory progress, it is slower than that in reading, particularly for boys. Nevertheless, standards in writing are starting to improve as the result of

good work by the school to provide more tasks to stimulate pupils' interest, particularly in English lessons. A significant strength throughout the school lies in pupils' art and design work, which shows impressive creativity and attention to detail. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and make particularly good progress in their reading. More-able pupils make good progress and the proportion who attain the higher levels is comparable with that found nationally.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good personal development is an important reason for their good academic progress. Their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development shows in the way they think deeply about issues such as the environment, develop a good sense of right and wrong, and work well in partnership with others. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, including those of peer mentors and acting as members of the school council. Nearly all behave well, although a small minority of pupils find it hard to stick to the rules and are excluded for a period.

Pupils have positive attitudes to work, attend regularly and enjoy school. Typical comments from pupils included, 'The teachers are great! They are really helpful' and, 'It's a lovely school where we make really good friends'. Pupils are quick to say that they feel safe at school and know who to go to when they need support or guidance. They are well informed about healthy eating and they make the most of the many opportunities to play sport. Pupils make a good contribution to the community by performing music and plays to members of the public and raising considerable sums of money for a wide range of charities. They are well prepared for the future by improving their reading, mathematical and information and communication technology skills and taking part in challenges such as planning parties to a tight budget.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good quality of teaching explains why pupils make such quick progress throughout the school. Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes, where the teaching is stimulating and demanding. Throughout the school, teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and pupils respond well by trying hard to succeed. Occasionally, however, the teachers talk to the whole class for too long and this means that more-able pupils who could work independently are held back. Teachers work hard to trigger pupils' curiosity and to gain their interest and it is no surprise that pupils say, 'The best thing about the school is the teachers'. In one art and design lesson, for example, the pupils were fascinated by the examples of ancient glassware shown on the large computer screen. They could hardly wait to attempt their own versions and their designs were impressive. The relationships in class are good. Teachers value pupils' contributions highly and this gives them the confidence to answer difficult questions.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and set them challenging but achievable targets. The very good partnership between teachers and skilled teaching assistants ensures that pupils of all abilities get the support they need to succeed.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is planned well to make learning interesting and relevant to the needs of all groups of pupils. The clear focus on literacy and numeracy means that pupils make rapid progress in their reading and number skills. However, it does not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to write in subjects such as science, history and geography. The curriculum for children in the Reception is effective and matched well to children's age and experience. This is reflected in the good progress they make. The well-organised provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means they achieve well and are fully included in all activities. The good provision for personal, social and health education helps pupils learn how to stay healthy and safe. There is a wide range of enrichment activities, including visits, visitors, clubs and sporting activities that makes the curriculum come to life. The very good use of the grounds and local area gives pupils a good understanding of their environment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school successfully ensures pupils' health and safety. There are effective risk assessments for all school activities and robust child protection procedures. All pupils, including those most at risk, are supported well. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements. Academic guidance is good. Teachers' regular assessments and helpful guidance in their marking give pupils a good feel for how well they are doing and how they can improve. The school has efficient systems to track pupils' recent progress but the data on their previous attainment is patchy.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support and guidance from teachers and teaching assistants and do well in achieving their academic and behavioural targets. The school works very effectively with parents and other professionals to meet pupils' social, emotional and academic needs. Recent improvements in the way pupils' behaviour is managed have resulted in a sharp drop in the number of exclusions. The school provides very good information to pupils about to move on to secondary school so they feel confident and well prepared for the future.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads well with a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is gained through sound self-evaluation systems that provide a clear vision of where and how to make improvements. Since the opening of the school the headteacher has worked successfully with senior leaders to create a team of staff that works effectively together. The school has formed good partnerships with other schools and the City Council to enhance provision for sports and give pupils a good understanding of how to care for their environment.

There is a positive atmosphere in the school in which all staff are committed to improvement. The regular evaluations of the quality of teaching by senior leaders and clear guidance on how to teach better have helped to raise standards in all subjects and made significant improvements in pupils' behaviour. However, the school recognises the need to enhance the role of subject leaders who are not yet fully involved in this process.

The school manages its finances well. Staff are deployed well to make the most of their skills and the school makes very good use of the excellent grounds and specialist facilities to enhance provision for sport, art and design and music.

The governors, many of whom are new, are supportive of the school and have become increasingly involved in preparing the improvement plan. They rightly see that the next priority is to undergo extra training to give them the skills to fully hold the school to account.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

|  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | <b>School Overall</b> |
|--|-----------------------|

### Overall effectiveness

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b> | 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  | 3  |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements  | 2  |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection   | NA |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>How well do learners achieve?</b>   | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 |
| 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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                           | 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 | 2 |

### The quality of provision

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>          | 2 |
| <b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b> | 2 |
| <b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>   | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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   | 3   |
| 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  |

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 July 2007

Dear Pupils,

Bowhill Primary School, Buddle Lane, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon EX4 1JT

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection. You were very helpful and those who were kind enough to speak to inspectors made it clear that you are proud of your school. We enjoyed watching you work so hard in class and performing with such confidence in your outstanding production of 'The Wizard of Oz'. You feel that yours is a good school, and we agree.

What we found out about your school:

- Your personal development is good. You behave well, enjoy school and know how to keep yourselves healthy and safe.
- You make good progress, and your standards are similar to those of most schools.
- Your teachers are doing a good job. They know you very well and work hard to help you succeed. You say how much you like the teachers and how they make lessons fun.
- You are given an interesting range of activities and make very good use of the excellent facilities in school and outside.
- The leadership and management are good. The people who are in charge know how to improve things and have done well to join two schools into one so effectively.
- You are well cared for and get good help when you are worried. What we have found the school should improve:
  - Your teachers should give you more opportunities to write in all subjects.
  - The teachers in charge of the subjects need to work more closely with other staff to make sure you are all doing as well as you can.

Best wishes for the future.

Terry Elston Lead inspector