

Bassingbourn Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110602
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310356
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Joy Richardson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jo Norcross
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Murray
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Brook Road Bassingbourn Royston SG8 5NP
Telephone number	01763 242460
Fax number	01763 242460

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the village of Bassingbourn and the surrounding area. Around 20% of pupils come from the nearby army training barracks. Mobility amongst pupils is high. Approximately 95% of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average. Attainment on entry is generally below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school gives pupils an outstanding education. The school evaluates its effectiveness as good, aware that it can improve further, but this is unduly modest. One parent spoke for many with the comment, 'Educationally and socially, we couldn't ask for more from our school'. The school achieves very high standards in an atmosphere of enthusiasm and encouragement. Staff and pupils work hard and strive to do their best. Learning has a proper sense of urgency, while laughter and fun abound too.

Pupils make excellent progress through the school, whatever their starting point. The school has a very clear view of how well pupils are doing and how they can be helped to do even better. It quickly takes steps to give extra help to those who need it. This helps pupils to keep up with expectations for their age and often to exceed them. By the time pupils leave, standards are very high compared with schools nationally.

Children thrive as people. They absorb the values that are taught and modelled by the staff, for example celebrating the achievements of others, welcoming newcomers warmly and taking a stand against bullying. Pupils relish the increasing responsibility and opportunity to show initiative that they are offered as they move through the school. Class councils and the school council give everyone a voice in how to make the school even better. The quality of care for pupils is extremely high, and every individual is valued and helped to succeed.

Teaching is outstanding. The leadership team closely monitors the quality of teaching and learning, providing feedback to help improvement. The whole staff focuses together on ways to make learning more effective, for example in considering how to improve writing and how to promote active ways of learning. Teachers regularly check the progress pupils are making and pinpoint where action is needed. Teaching assistants provide excellent support in group sessions tailored to the needs of individuals and groups. All this contributes to the high level of pupils' achievement.

The school offers pupils a broad curriculum. Pupils enjoy many opportunities in art and music, and a rich provision of extra-curricular activities outside lesson time. The school is planning to extend the links made between subjects in order to find further ways of reinforcing pupils' learning.

The school is led and managed extremely well. The headteacher, with excellent support from the leadership team and from the governing body, is driving the school forward to achieve the best for all pupils. The school is very well-organised, communication is excellent and everyone knows what is expected of them. The school is rigorous in analysing where it could do better, and acting on this. As a result, the pace of improvement since the previous inspection has been rapid. The quality of the school's leadership and teamwork is reflected in the school's determination to improve further and its excellent capacity to do so.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage gives children a good start to their education. Children make good progress in the Reception year in relation to their attainment on entry. By the end of the year, some children reach the early learning goals set nationally for the end of this stage, and most are well on their way towards them. Children gain independence in looking after themselves. They learn to work and play amicably and they become keen learners. Children enjoy working

with numbers. They make good progress in learning the sounds of letters, although this is not linked enough to practice in writing them. Teaching is good, often helping children to learn by doing, but occasionally requiring too much passive listening.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to strengthen pupils' writing skills and to promote active ways of learning.
- Enhance the curriculum by linking learning across different subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high. Children achieve well in Reception, and make excellent progress in Years 1 and 2. This leads to standards by the end of Year 2 that are above the national average in all areas, except at the higher levels in writing. Pupils' progress between Year 2 and Year 6 is outstanding. Results in national tests for Year 6 pupils in 2007 were extremely high in comparison with schools nationally. The progress made by these pupils from Year 2 was exceptional, placing the school in the top one per cent of schools nationally. The school has been highly effective since the time of the last inspection in raising standards and working to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they are capable of doing. Pupils' progress is checked regularly and action is taken promptly where it is needed. The school sets challenging targets that are shared with pupils, and these are usually met or exceeded. Lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported extremely effectively and often make excellent progress as a result.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships are excellent between pupils and with adults. Pupils readily take responsibility. They welcome newcomers and make sure that no-one feels left out. As one pupil said, 'If you feel down, someone helps you'. Pupils contribute enthusiastically to the school and wider community, for example in raising money for charities. Pupils are extremely keen to make healthy and safe lifestyle choices, for example, by taking part in a wide range of sporting activities. Pupils develop high levels of skills that prepare them extremely well for the next stage of education and for future life. Attendance is good. Punctuality has improved since the last inspection, giving a prompt start to the day.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. High quality teaching is underpinned by strong systems to ensure that each pupil makes the progress expected. Teachers manage classes extremely well so that pupils work hard and are keen to learn. Teachers explain ideas clearly and question pupils skilfully to build understanding. Pupils readily share their ideas and concentrate willingly on the task in hand. In many lessons, every minute is used to the full and pupils' active participation maximises their learning. Occasionally, the pace slows because activities do not keep everyone fully involved. The school recognises this and is working to extend excellence in teaching through a focus on active methods of learning. Resources, including digital projectors

in all classrooms, are used well as an aid to learning. Excellent teamwork, by teachers and highly-skilled teaching assistants, ensures that teaching is matched closely to pupils' needs, abilities and targets for learning. Teachers mark work, and help pupils to evaluate their own learning, in ways that help pupils to improve, though basic skills in writing are not always reinforced consistently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of all learners. Lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well, within the class and by special programmes taught in smaller groups. Personal, social and health education features strongly and pupils gain much from learning about friendship and feelings. Pupils' education is enriched by an extensive range of clubs, team sports and health-related activities as well as instrumental tuition. Pupils take part with great enthusiasm in the school choir and orchestra, and in the drama productions that are a highlight of school life. The school has identified the need to link subjects more closely, in order to set learning in context and to broaden opportunities for the application of skills. The structure of the day has been tightened since the previous inspection, creating more time for learning and contributing to higher standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding pastoral care and support for pupils. The adults provide excellent role models. Consistently high expectations are combined with caring and warm relationships that lead pupils to take responsibility for themselves. The school takes great care of pupils who face particular difficulties and they flourish as a result. Rigorous child protection arrangements and risk assessments are in place. The school is effective in working to improve attendance. It works very well with other agencies in providing excellent support for pupils. Very effective target setting and guidance in lessons help pupils to set sights high and to gain confidence from their success. A high proportion of pupils join the school late. The school is highly effective in ensuring that new pupils, whatever their language or ethnic background, are welcomed and integrated rapidly into school life. Teaching builds on their prior attainment and they make progress at an excellent rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The headteacher's clarity of vision and determination to achieve the best for pupils permeate the school's work. She is exceptionally effective in harnessing the efforts of the large staff team and generating a sense of purpose and optimism about further improvement. An extremely strong leadership team is in place and responsibilities are shared widely so that everyone is able to contribute in moving the school forward. Subject leadership is being developed further to enhance provision for subjects across the school as a whole. The governing body is extremely effective in supporting the school and its strategy for improvement, and securing excellent value for money. The school has excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress and for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. It rigorously evaluates its performance and this results in purposeful planning for improvement. The school's leadership is committed to ensuring that the needs of every child are met, and

the staff are skilfully deployed to bring this about. The school's accommodation has been adapted and refurbished to provide a very attractive environment for learning. Resources are used well and the school's administration and financial management are highly effective.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 Bassingbourn Primary School, Bassingbourn SG8 5NR

We enjoyed visiting your school this week. Thank you for being polite and friendly and talking to us about what you do at school. Now it is our turn to write and tell you what we found out.

We think that you go to an excellent school. The staff are extremely good at helping you to learn and to do as well as you possibly can. You reach high standards by the time you leave. One of you told us, 'We learn a lot but in a fun way,' and we agree. You work hard and try your best and your teachers work really hard too.

We were impressed by the way that everyone gets along together and gets on with learning. You are good at welcoming new pupils and making sure no-one feels lonely. It was good to see the older pupils helping out in so many ways, like being playleaders and helping in the dining hall. You have a very busy and interesting time at school, as we could see from the marvellous Christmas performances.

One of the reasons that the school is so extremely good is that Mrs Murray and the staff are always thinking about how to make it even better. We agree that it would be good to help you practise your writing more. The staff also want to help you learn by doing things more yourselves in lessons, and by linking up what you learn in different subjects.

You are lucky to go to such a wonderful school. We hope that you will go on working hard and making the school an excellent place for everyone.

Yours sincerely

Joy Richardson

Lead inspector