

Bollington St John's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111324
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310565
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Carruthers

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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rhona Prescott
Headteacher	Mrs Marta Jones
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Grimshaw Lane Bollington Macclesfield Cheshire SK10 5LY
Telephone number	01625 572025
Fax number	01625 576603

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

All the pupils in this small primary school are of White British origin. Very few are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. Children starting in the Reception class have attended the independent pre-school group which is held daily in a room in the school. At the time of the inspection an acting headteacher had been in place since April 2007. The school is in an Education Improvement Partnership with the associated secondary school and is subject to reorganisation proposals by the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school provides a good education for its pupils. It has improved well since the last inspection and has some outstanding features. These are: pupils' personal development and well-being, the care, guidance and support provided for pupils, and how well the school helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to have the best possible opportunities. Its capacity to improve is good. The cost of educating a pupil at the school is above the average of primary schools nationally but more in line with similarly sized schools and, given the quality of education it provides, it provides good value for money.

Pupils achieve well and standards are above average in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science but vary according to the nature of the small year groups. The good achievement of pupils is the result of good teaching and learning. Key strengths of the teaching include the high expectations that staff have of pupils and the good level of challenge in the work they set. Pupils' learning is good because they have excellent relationships with staff and concentrate very well in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, make outstanding progress because of the high quality of the support they receive from teachers and especially from teaching assistants.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are polite and very considerate towards one another. They take great pride in their achievements and those of other pupils. Their attendance and punctuality are good. They develop skills of teamwork and independence that stand them in excellent stead when they go on to secondary school. These positive attributes are the result of the very good attitudes they bring from home and the outstanding contribution the staff make in caring, guiding and supporting them.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and meets all requirements. It is enriched by topic work and themed events, called Buzz Weeks. Procedures to track the progress of pupils in English, mathematics and science are very good and used well to halt any signs of underachievement by individual pupils. Staff mark pupils' work conscientiously and there are examples of excellent practice in which pupils are given clear indications of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The best practice, however, is not fully consistent across both Key Stage 2 classes. Partnerships with other schools, in particular the associated secondary school, and other agencies, are good.

Leadership and management under the very effective guidance of the acting headteacher are good. The improvements evident at the last inspection have continued, despite changes across all staffing levels and uncertainty surrounding the school's future. Parents hold the work of the staff in the highest regard. The school's commitment to do the best for pupils whatever their learning needs is excellent. Its impact is evident in the achievement of pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Procedures to evaluate the work of the school are good because of the very good assessment systems in place. However, monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet fully embedded and the staff have training needs in order to better evaluate how effective the provision is. The challenge and support provided by the governing body are excellent. The governors bring a very wide range of expertise to their roles and their contribution to strategic planning is very good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good with outstanding features. Children start in the Reception class with levels of attainment that are average, though this varies from year to year. They make good progress so that by the end of the year almost all children have reached the early learning goals in all areas of learning and some are at a higher level. An outstanding feature of the Reception class is the support given to children who have a statement of special educational need. This is the result of excellent teamwork among the staff and leads to the exceptional progress of individual children. All children enjoy the many opportunities both indoors and outside to develop their interest in the world around them and to play imaginatively, for instance when they are excited by visitors such as members of the Fire Service. Staff plan children's learning very well and keep excellent records of their assessment of children through observations. This is true also of the commentary that staff add to children's written work, indicating an informed and intimate understanding of their progress. Leadership is good and there is regular partnership with the pre-school group so that children settle in very quickly when they start in school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the leadership skills of the teaching staff, including the monitoring of teaching and learning through observing lessons.
- Make more consistent and effective use of the marking policy in Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in the Key Stage 1 class so that by the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average. In some years standards are significantly above average because of variations in the nature of the small year groups. Pupils' writing is especially good because staff use stimulating starting points that motivate pupils, especially boys, to write well. A successful feature evident in the work of all classes is the production of books of pupils' stories, properly bound and illustrated. Pupils express pride in these achievements. Good progress continues in the Key Stage 2 classes. Whenever there has been lower than expected performance in Year 6, staff have explored the reasons fully. This happened this year in relation to the attainment in science of the more able pupils. Staff addressed the shortcomings and performance has improved. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is particularly good and the subject is used very well to promote high standards of presentation in subjects such as science, history and geography.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The ability of all pupils to work and play happily together, older ones with younger, is a clear indication of this. Pupils' understanding of the importance of leading a healthy and fit lifestyle is good and the school has begun the process of achieving the Healthy Schools Award to help them further. Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety through lessons on personal, social and health education and visiting specialist services. They make an excellent contribution to their community. Pupils have responsibilities in school, including being prefects or members of the school council, which they take seriously. Pupils also contribute very well to the wider community

through their contributions to local, national and international charities including support for a child in Brazil. The good progress that pupils make in their basic skills added to the very positive attitude pupils have to working with others prepares them exceptionally well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

In all lessons teaching is stimulating and lively. The pace of learning is brisk and there is a good balance between teacher-led and independent activities that keep pupils fully engaged. Teachers' use of questioning is good and enables pupils to provide clear explanations. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm for learning to pupils through very high expectations. Planning for lessons is detailed and makes effective use of assessments so that the work can be pitched at a challenging level for pupils of all abilities. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to lessons. Parents are able to be involved well in their children's learning, for example through meetings about the curriculum, homework diaries and invitations to join pupils during Buzz Weeks. While pupils' work is marked regularly there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking across Key Stage 2 classes and some pupils do not always have clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection when it was found to be satisfactory but requiring better planning of what pupils learn and the skills they acquire. This has now been fully achieved. The two-year rolling programme of studies caters well for all National Curriculum subjects and a very good feature is the contribution ICT makes to other subjects. Personal, social and health education makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Visits to places of local interest and residential experiences give rise to good opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in writing. Pupils who are identified as talented in particular skills are encouraged to take part in local initiatives, for example with the associated secondary school, to encourage and challenge them. The staff provide a very good range of clubs and activities for pupils to enjoy after school, including learning French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

These are key strengths that contribute fully to the outstanding personal development and well-being of pupils. All aspects of child protection, health and safety and the safe recruitment of staff are in place. Parents are especially appreciative of the expertise and support of staff. A comment typical of many is, 'The school is small enough to have a real community feel we have always felt to be a big plus.' Links with outside agencies are good and contribute very well to making life at school the best possible experience for pupils, for example in the way the staff include pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The tracking of pupils' personal and academic development is very effective and the information is used very well to meet pupils' individual needs and provide them with targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher has successfully maintained the drive towards school improvement begun by the previous headteacher. With very good support from the school improvement partner and governing body, staff work together very effectively as a team to share the challenges the school faces. School development planning is clear, well focused on standards and quality and costed appropriately. School self-evaluation is similarly undertaken by the whole team, who have analysed performance data carefully and taken effective steps to address weaknesses. Because the staff team is small, they have many roles and consequently training needs in subject leadership. The governing body is very well led by the chair person and parents lend their full support to the leadership of the school. Typical comments are, 'All the teachers show absolute dedication to the children,' and, 'The staff and governors have really good working relations and rapport.'

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	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	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	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	1

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?	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?	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	1
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	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

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

Inspection of Bollington St John's C of E Primary School, Macclesfield, SK10 5LY

I would like to thank you very much for your help when I inspected your school. I enjoyed my visit very much. Now I would like to share with you my thoughts about your school.

Yours is a good school and has some outstanding features, for instance:

- the staff take excellent care of you all and teach you well
- it is clear that you really enjoy school and your behaviour is outstanding
- you make good progress in English, mathematics, science and ICT
- the staff arrange a rich range of activities for you to enjoy in lessons, Buzz Weeks, after-school clubs and on trips
- the staff help those of you who find their work difficult exceptionally well.

Part of my job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better.

There are two things to do and you can help with one of them.

- The staff have introduced some good ways to mark your work. The junior class teachers need to use these more regularly and let you know what you need to do to improve. You can help by taking notice of the marking and always trying your best.
- The staff would benefit from further training in how to lead and check on the subjects they are responsible for in school.

So work hard and carry on enjoying school!