

Berrycoombe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111924
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	310730
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Tom Simpson

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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Twigg
Headteacher	Derek Rushton
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Berrycoombe Vale Bodmin PL31 2PH
Telephone number	01208 74969
Fax number	01208 74969

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school, serving an urban community. The majority of pupils are from a White British background and only a very small number are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The main difficulties of these pupils relate to delayed literacy skills. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is above average. The school has recently received the Healthy Schools Award and achieved Extended School status. The current headteacher is due to retire at the end of this term and a new headteacher will take up post in September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This popular school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It also has some significant strengths. A major strength is the exceptional level of pastoral care it provides. All pupils, regardless of their needs or abilities, are highly respected as individuals by all staff, are valued for the contribution they make, and are very successfully supported in the development of their self-esteem. The very successful inclusion of all pupils into all the school's activities is a significant part of its strong caring ethos. Consequently, the pupils thoroughly enjoy school and their personal development is good. Nearly all parents are pleased with the provision the school makes for their children. Typically, one parent wrote, 'My son loves school. Every morning he talks excitedly about what he is going to do and when he comes home, he enthuses about the things he has learned'. Another commented, 'We have great confidence in the teaching skills we have observed, the non-tolerance of disruption in class and the warmth and kindness shown to all pupils, especially disadvantaged ones'.

Achievement is satisfactory overall and pupils leave the school with broadly average standards. Progress is particularly good in the Reception Year and in Years 1 and 2. However, although often good, progress in Years 3 to 6 is too variable. Standards in reading are a strength of the school, but standards in science are a relative weakness, particularly in Years 3 to 6, and more able pupils are not reaching the levels they are capable of. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities sometimes make good progress against their individual targets, especially when having specifically targeted group support. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching, and it is sometimes outstanding, but pupils' learning is occasionally held back when teachers do not do enough to promote their independence. Teachers are very conscious of the different needs of the pupils and go out of their way to make the work they set interesting for them. A good curriculum is provided. All statutory requirements are met and a very good range of enrichment activities supports pupils' love of learning well.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but have some specific strengths. For example, the headteacher and staff have a very strong commitment to all aspects of the school's provision and a clear view of what needs to be done to improve this further. Self-evaluation procedures are strong and, with the support of the local authority, a number of initiatives have been put in place, for instance to improve the school's procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress and ensure a good quality of teaching is embedded throughout the school. Some of these strategies, however, have not been in place long enough for their impact to be fully felt in terms of higher achievement.

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Academic guidance has been strengthened through the introduction of sharper targets for improvement. Given a good number of improvements in the recent past, the school has a sound capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children enter the school with standards which are below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress across all the areas of learning during their time in the Reception class. However, they still have relative weaknesses in aspects of their communication, language and literacy skills by the time they reach Year 1. Conversely, their personal, social and emotional development is a particular strength. For example, they have positive attitudes towards their

tasks and work and play well with one another. The children are well taught and are provided with a relevant and stimulating curriculum. They are very well cared for by the teacher and by the non-teaching staff. The provision is managed effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in science, especially for more able pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so that all teaching is good or better.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children make good progress in the Reception class. By the time they reach Year 1, their standards are close to the expected level. Standards in Year 2, after a period of decline, have improved significantly and are now average overall. In the 2007 national tests in Year 6, results were broadly average in English and mathematics but significantly below average in science, mainly because of poor performance at the higher Level 5. Evidence from the school's tracking system and current work shows that while overall standards in science have risen, performance at the higher levels still lags behind that in other subjects. Pupils enter the school with standards which are below those typically expected for their age. Most, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory progress and a significant number make good progress. Pupils who are withdrawn from class for extra specialist tuition make particularly good progress. Overall achievement is adversely affected by the above average number of pupils who enter and leave the school other than at the normal time. However, progress throughout the school is inconsistent. For example, it is good in Years 1 and 2, but is more variable in Years 3 to 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes towards their work. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Their attendance has improved significantly over the past year and is now average. The pupils are very aware of the need to lead healthy lifestyles and greatly appreciate the regular opportunities they have to take part in exercises such as 'huff and puff' and to participate in competitive sport. They appreciate the opportunities to contribute to the school and wider communities. The school council is increasingly involved in school life and work. Its members, for example, feel a strong sense of pride in being involved in the recent selection of a new headteacher. Pupils also enjoy taking part in local events, such as St Piran's Day and contributing to charities such as Comic Relief. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, for example, they have developed a strong ability to empathise with one another. They respect each other's views and have considered the cultural impact of slavery. Given pupils' sound basic skills, they are satisfactorily prepared for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The pupils are very well managed in a consistently positive manner. This contributes very well to their self-esteem and to their overall personal development. Planning is thorough and teachers use a good variety of methods which successfully stimulate the pupils to want to learn. For example, in one science lesson, pupils plunged their hands into very wet mud in order to simulate the impact on roots of plants which had been over-watered! In some lessons, however, a discussion is allowed to go on too long, or a teacher dominates a discussion too much, detracting from the development of pupils' capacity to learn independently. There are robust procedures in place to assess and track pupils' progress. These are used effectively to provide extra support for pupils who are not doing as well as they might. However, they have not been in place long enough to have had a full impact on overall standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well matched to the very differing needs of the pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a good balance between developing basic skills and providing creative activities such as art and music. The overall curriculum is greatly enhanced by a wide range of extra activities such as music and sports clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 have the opportunity to take part in a residential camp. A focus on specific subjects, such as during an arts week, and visits from theatre companies contributes very well to pupils' personal development. The good curriculum provided in the Reception class is effective in supporting the children's progress. The good links with other schools include the contribution being made by the local secondary school to the provision of French, science and art. However, there is still some inconsistency in the promotion of investigative science and this is a factor contributing to the relatively weak standards being reached in this subject in Years 3 to 6.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care provided for the pupils is outstanding and relationships between staff and pupils are very strong throughout the school. The pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are highly respected as individuals by staff and their contributions to school life are greatly valued. Staff have a very good understanding of pupils' social, emotional and academic needs. This knowledge is having a very positive impact on pupils' personal development and is beginning to have an impact on their academic development. The school makes good use of outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Procedures for helping the above average number of pupils who arrive during the course of the school year to settle in are effective. Pupils are being provided with relevant targets for academic improvement but the present system has not been in place long enough for its full impact to be felt on standards. Robust procedures are in place for child protection, health and safety and safe staff recruitment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and other senior staff have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's procedures for self-evaluation are now strong and, with the support of the local authority, a number of strategies for improvement have been introduced. Some, such as initiatives to raise standards in science, are already having an impact on pupils' progress. On the other hand, several of these strategies, including refined assessment and academic target setting procedures, have not been in place long enough for their full effect to be realised. The coordinators of key subjects have a significant role in monitoring provision and teaching in their subjects. However, because of the school's recent focus on raising standards in the basic skills, a few coordinators are not yet sufficiently involved in checking on the quality of work in the areas for which they are responsible.

The governors are keen and supportive and have a good understanding of the school's needs. They monitor the work of the school in a number of appropriate ways. However, some aspects of their monitoring role have not yet been sufficiently formalised.

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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?	3
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	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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?	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?	3
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	3
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	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

26 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Berrycoombe School, Bodmin PL31 2PH

Thank you for making us so welcome at your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing about your work. I want particularly to thank those of you who gave up part of your lunch break to speak with us. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. It also has several strengths.

Here are some of the things we found:

- You behave well and get on really well with each other.
- You are developing other good personal skills that are important for later life, and have a particularly good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles.
- You are very well cared for by the adults at the school.
- You are provided with a good curriculum and are given lots of interesting things to do in and outside lessons.
- Teaching is often good, and you are making at least satisfactory progress in your work; you are doing particularly well in reading.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors are working hard to make the school even better.
- All pupils are well included in all the school's activities.

Here is what we have asked the school to do now:

- Make sure pupils in Years 3 to 6 reach higher standards in science, especially those of you who learn more quickly.
- Make sure that teaching is always at least good.

I hope that all of you will do your bit by continuing to work very hard.

Thank you again for your time.

With best wishes

Tom Simpson Lead Inspector