

Buxton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112522
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310913
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Roy Bowers HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Uprichard
Headteacher	Mrs Sarah Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2004
School address	Hardwick Square Buxton Derbyshire SK17 6QB
Telephone number	01298 22499
Fax number	01298 22499

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average, with the number of pupils on roll declining over recent years. All pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. When children start in Reception there is wide range of attainment but overall, attainment on entry is below that expected for pupils of that age, especially in literacy. Following the resignation of the headteacher at the end of the summer term, the school is currently led and managed by an acting headteacher who is already a teacher at the school. A new headteacher will take up post in January 2008. There is currently no deputy headteacher and the governors have no plans to appoint one.

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. It has some outstanding features. It is easy to see why parents speak so highly of it. One parent commented, 'My child loves it here. He settled in right from the start. Since then everyone has helped him and taken good care of him'. Pupils are polite, courteous, enthusiastic and well-behaved. The school's commitment to good quality care and support for local children is seen in the strong links it has with the nursery, out of school care club and the weekly toddler group, all of which operate from the school premises. Provision for the most vulnerable pupils is excellent. The school works very well with external agencies and provides pupils, and sometimes their families, with a high level of focused support.

During their time in Reception, children make at least good progress, reaching and sometimes exceeding the goals set for them. This momentum continues in Years 1 and 2, with the result that standards are above average by the time pupils leave school. Achievement of the most able pupils is exceptional. The school recognises their needs at an early stage and sets targets which provide a very good level of challenge. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make outstanding progress, mainly due to the support they receive from highly skilled teaching assistants.

Teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. Learning is particularly good when teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn and work is matched well to the needs of all pupils. However, this is not always consistent, and in some classes a few pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. In the classrooms and around school, relationships are a strong feature. Pupils get on well together and adults show a good deal of care and concern for the welfare and education of all pupils. The curriculum provides a good balance between lessons focusing on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and work based upon real life experiences. Pupils took great pride in producing a Buxton Town Guide which included a variety of maps, pictures and articles. The school provides exceptionally well for pupils' development in art. Pupils speak enthusiastically of how much they learn through working with the ceramic artist. Parents were invited to see the good quality sculptures that pupils produced following a visit to Chatsworth.

The curriculum is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They willingly take part in the many physical and sporting activities provided by the school. Most pupils understand that eating fruit and vegetables contributes towards a healthy diet and choose wisely from the lunch menu. Pupils respond very well to the opportunities provided to support the wider community and talk enthusiastically about their contributions to charities such as Oxfam. Through the school council and eco committee, pupils enthusiastically take on responsibilities which will enable them to take part in community activities and influence aspects of school life. Pupils are proud that they have contributed to the paper recycling and energy saving initiatives. These positive attitudes to their community, together with their achievement in lessons, give pupils a good grounding for their future learning.

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher has successfully maintained the caring ethos of the school and its drive for improvement. Although pupils' progress is monitored well, the data is sometimes not analysed carefully enough to monitor the progress of classes or groups of pupils. Although monitoring and evaluation allow the school to identify the main areas for improvement accurately, some of these procedures are not always carried

out systematically. Governors support the school exceptionally well. They know the strengths and weaknesses and have worked very effectively to improve on achievement and standards. The school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

All children enjoy their work and play together happily in a friendly and caring environment. The adults provide them with an appropriate balance of teacher-led activities and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. The various resources and outdoor area add to the stimulating curriculum. Children behave well, although a very small number find it difficult to concentrate if they have to sit for too long without activity. Because of children's low starting points, especially in the basic skills of language and mathematics, much of the teaching is focused on improving children's understanding in these areas. This is very successful. Most children achieve well and some make exceptional progress. The very good induction procedures help children settle happily into new routines. Reception children take seriously their responsibilities of acting as 'buddy' to the January intake children. One parent commented, 'My child settled in well right from the first minute. All the adults are great. They really care for the children'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that all teaching is focused on what pupils are required to learn, and work is carefully matched to their needs.
- Use the data more carefully to monitor the progress of classes and groups of pupils.
- Ensure that all aspects of the school's formal self-evaluation procedures are systematically planned and carried out.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 2, pupils have made good progress and standards are above average. The most able pupils consistently make exceptional progress, especially in writing, with a greater proportion of pupils regularly reaching the higher levels than in most other schools. Mainly due to the very effective support systems and the use of highly skilled teaching assistants, the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties is excellent. Girls reach higher standards than boys, but when their starting points are considered both boys and girls achieve equally well. The slight dip in standards in 2007 was due to the school not recognising early enough that a few of the middle ability pupils were not making as much progress as they could.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are happy, content, enjoy lessons and behave well. One parent said, 'The happiness of the whole school is reflected in happy children who feel accepted and loved'. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work because they feel safe, secure and well cared for. Although pupils say that instances of bullying are rare, they are confident that staff will help them should any problems arise. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. Their good understanding of the multicultural society in which they live is promoted well through visits to places of worship, visitors, and school projects when pupils study different faiths. Behaviour is good, but there are times when pupils do not immediately do as they are told.

Over recent years the school has implemented many strategies to improve pupils' attendance. As a result, rates have risen and are now average. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and a very good contribution to the wider community. Several of the school's arts projects have been carried out in collaboration with local businesses and venues. Local groups use the school's facilities, pupils dance at the Opera House, the eco committee promotes recycling in the community and the school supports numerous local charities. In school, pupils readily carry out a variety of responsibilities, such as being on the school council, the eco committee or acting as 'buddies' who spot upset pupils and try to resolve their problems.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, the good relationships between teachers and pupils are reflected in pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their self-confidence and their increasing independence. Teachers create an orderly and calm working atmosphere. Pupils respond well to this and work hard. Many lessons have a clear focus on basic skills while other lessons help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of wider aspects of the world. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and are especially proud of the work they do in art. Lessons from the local artist and sports coach add considerably to pupils' learning in those areas. Teaching assistants play a valuable and skilled role in supporting pupils, especially those with learning difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum places good emphasis on developing pupils' personal and social skills, and makes a good contribution to their safe and healthy lifestyles. It is matched generally well to all pupils, but especially to the most able and those with learning difficulties. The school has been awarded the 'Artsmark', and provides opportunities for pupils to be involved in a range of creative activities. The curriculum is successfully enhanced by a good variety of educational outings, which makes learning enjoyable, allows pupils to develop their cultural awareness and provides them with stimulating real-life experiences. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements in information and communication technology (ICT). More computers, better software, greater staff knowledge and timetabled use of the ICT suite have enabled pupils to become more confident and skilled in the use of computers as an aid to learning. Pupils respond eagerly to the broad range of extra-curricular activities, including opportunities to be involved in sport and drama.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a warm and friendly place where the adults know the pastoral needs of every pupil. This helps pupils achieve well. Parents are positive about the care and support given to their children. One parent said, 'The level of commitment, support and understanding of our child and her needs is excellent and beyond reproach'. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are robust, and contribute well to pupils' feeling of security and care. The strong partnerships with local agencies, such as Family Support, help meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils exceptionally well. Pupils experiencing problems are quickly identified and receive very good support from school staff and family support workers. Staff

are always alert to signs that any pupil might be worried or anxious, and they know what to do in these circumstances. Progress of pupils is monitored well and systems are used to identify those who are falling behind with their work and who may need extra guidance. All pupils are set challenging targets in literacy and numeracy, and, when procedures for checking progress are implemented regularly, pupils are guided well towards them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The acting headteacher has maintained the strong teamwork, the caring approach from all staff and the drive for improvement. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development, has analysed the most recent test results well and knows accurately why there was a slight dip in standards in 2007. The systems for monitoring pupils' progress are good and are used very well to provide support for pupils who are falling behind with their work. However, on some occasions the data is not used carefully enough to inform the leadership of progress made by the different classes or groups of pupils. Subject co-ordinators lead staff training and assist where necessary. They provide good support and monitor some aspects of their subject, but this is not always carried out in a systematic way. Although lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work take place, they are sometimes not recorded and the improvement stemming from them is limited. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school, are proud of its achievements and take immediate action when necessary. They support and challenge the school very well, and are involved in all aspects of school self-evaluation.

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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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

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?	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?	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	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	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

7 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Buxton Infant School, Buxton, SK17 6QB

Thank you for making my recent visit to your school such an enjoyable experience. I learned a lot about your school from you. I enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your books and talking to you. I could see that you try hard to do your best and I was very impressed with your behaviour and attitudes. I was very pleased to see how happy you are and to hear how much you enjoy coming to school.

Your teachers and other adults are kind and helpful and want you all to do your best. It was good to see how well the adults and children get on together. All of those parents who spoke or wrote to me said how well all the adults in school look after you. I think that some of your art work is very good. I particularly liked the sculptures and hearing how much you enjoyed the visit to Chatsworth.

Those of you who are already doing well with your work, and those of you who sometimes have difficulties, are making excellent progress. Well done! Although the teaching is good and sometimes excellent, I have asked your new headteacher to make it even better by ensuring that the work you are given is matched very carefully to your abilities in all lessons. Your teachers keep very detailed information about the progress you are making. However, they do not always use this information well enough to talk about the progress you are all making in all the classes. I have also asked the headteacher to make sure that the teachers regularly check to see if you are all making as much progress as you are able. You can help by continuing to work hard at school and listening carefully to whatever your teachers say.

I shall take away many good memories of your school and have very much enjoyed the time I have spent with you. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers Her Majesty's Inspector