

# Beckers Green Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114794
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311708
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Deane-Hall

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	293
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lesley Bojko
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Helen Scott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Beckers Green Road Braintree Essex CM7 3PR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01376 322687
<b>Fax number</b>	01376 326551

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a slightly larger than average primary school. The number of children eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are of White British origin with a few from minority ethnic groups. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of children who have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is well above average, and those with a statement of special educational need is above average. When children start school in the Foundation Stage, their skills and knowledge are low when compared with those expected for children of their age. The school has been awarded the Investors in People Award, The National Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory and it provides satisfactory value for money. Pupils, and the small number of parents who responded to the pre-inspection survey, have positive views of the school. One parent said, 'The school makes children feel part of a community...they mix with different year groups and have many friends.' Children make broadly satisfactory progress from entry to Year 6 but do not make enough progress to reach average standards by the time they leave the school. The school has recognised that standards have not been high enough in the past and over the last year has set about tackling the reasons for some pupils' slow progress. Standards in English are rising so that they are now just below average and in mathematics they are below average. In science, standards show improvement from a low point in 2007 but are still well below average. This is largely because there is not enough good or outstanding teaching in the school to help pupils make the good progress necessary for them to attain the expected levels.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching where pupils of differing abilities are provided with sufficiently challenging work matched to their needs. Even so, teachers generally do not have high enough expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve, particularly the more able pupils. As a result, too few of these pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Better checking of how well pupils are learning and the introduction of learning targets in English and mathematics, have contributed to good teaching seen during the inspection. However, these systems have not been in place long and information is not yet sufficiently used to set targets which result in raising standards in Year 6 across all subjects. In English, standards have risen because teaching helps pupils to improve their literacy skills by providing step-by-step guidance in their marking. However, this practice is not consistent across the school. The school provides a good range of activities to help pupils to learn. Careful planning of learning opportunities, with an emphasis on providing an interesting and creative curriculum is helping to ensure that pupils enjoy their varied work.

The school has a positive atmosphere where good behaviour and strong relationships prevail. Pupils enjoy school and attendance overall is broadly satisfactory. Good personal development reflects the strong emphasis placed on aspects of its care for pupils. The school is good at ensuring pupils are safe and secure and systems for safeguarding them meet all requirements. The personal support for pupils who find learning difficult is good and they make satisfactory progress. Pupils who have English as an additional language or those who are vulnerable, make satisfactory progress.

The newly appointed headteacher accurately judges the school's overall effectiveness as satisfactory. She has a clear and accurate picture of what the school needs to do to improve standards. While leadership and management are satisfactory overall, the headteacher's high expectations and vision are good. The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation is, however, inadequate. This is because senior leaders and managers have not yet focused clearly enough on how their systems for checking the effectiveness of the school's work can have an impact on pupils' learning. They have not, therefore, been effective at setting sufficiently challenging targets to raise standards. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive of the school and have an increasing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they have not sufficiently held the school to account for its standards.

The school has successfully tackled most of the issues from the last inspection, although marking, to help pupils to improve, is still not consistent across the school. The school is satisfactorily placed to continue to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. A varied curriculum and good teaching help children to achieve well. From a low starting point, children make good progress though, by the end of Reception Year, the standard of their work is still below the level expected for their age. Progress is particularly rapid in aspects of children's personal, social and emotional development, although there continues to be weaknesses in their communication skills, including early reading and writing. Careful attention to the induction of the children into school, together with regular communication to encourage parental involvement, help to support the children's confidence and readiness to learn. The Foundation Stage leader is developing effective links between her class and the next class to ensure that good provision and effective learning is maintained.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Make sure that the quality of teaching is consistently good enough to raise standards, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improve the way teachers use information about pupils' progress to set and share sufficiently challenging targets to support their learning.
- Ensure that marking, particularly in mathematics and science, helps pupils understand how they need to improve their work.
- Improve leaders' and governors' monitoring and evaluation of the school's work so that self evaluation is accurate and that challenging school targets are set.

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

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. The attainment of the current Year 6 pupils shows reasonable improvement compared with the low standards seen in the national tests in 2007. In English, these are now just below average. In mathematics, there is little change, and in science standards have improved to well below average from a previously exceptionally low position. Standards in both key stages have varied since the last inspection. This is because the school's self-evaluation has not been sufficiently rigorous to help identify how to improve the situation and until recently there was limited information about how well pupils were achieving. Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good, particularly in personal development and well-being. However, because of children's low starting points, many do not reach the levels expected by the time they begin Year 1. Achievement is satisfactory for those who find learning difficult, those who have English as an additional language and vulnerable children.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Most of the pupils behave well, enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are confident that their views are listened to and the school council is effective in bringing about change. They know well how to lead a healthy and safe life and are keen to do so. Their moral, social and cultural development are good. Though the spiritual dimension is less well developed, pupils are prepared well for life within a multicultural society and they develop a good understanding of different cultures and beliefs. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community. They willingly assume positions of responsibility, such as playleaders and take a very active role in looking after others, both within the school community and beyond. They valued the opportunity provided to gain first aid expertise and proudly displayed the skills learnt. In addition, pupils have participated in various fundraising activities and in raising 'eco' awareness. Pupils' good social development, their satisfactory progress in basic skills and their clear sense of responsibility to others, helps to equip them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers and pupils enjoy good relationships with each other. Learning thrives in classes where teachers encourage pupils to work independently and take some risks. Overall, there is insufficient good or outstanding teaching to raise attainment to reach average standards. Although teachers plan work at different levels in order to meet pupils' differing learning needs, there is a lack of expectation and challenge for those with higher abilities. At the beginning of lessons teachers explain to pupils what they are expected to learn but summaries at the end do not always focus sharply upon how successful they have been. Systems are now in place for assessment and the monitoring and tracking of progress but the quality of marking and feedback to pupils is inconsistent and does not always inform pupils about the next steps they need to take to improve. Teaching assistants have an appropriate focus for their work and make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A wide variety of experiences are provided and an increasingly creative approach towards curriculum planning is being developed. There is now a strong emphasis on linking subjects to help pupils understand how different areas of learning connect. Literacy and information and communication technology make strong contributions towards this work. Enrichment is provided through a range of activities, which include sports clubs, themed days, residential experiences and visits to places such as the Science Museum and Royal Opera House. There is a high take up for these events and pupils talk enthusiastically about them. A visiting artist worked with pupils to explore aspects of Australian, African and Indian cultures and this resulted in an inspirational Mandala display. Increasingly, the attractive outside area provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding about the environment and to bring a new dimension to learning. A comprehensive programme for personal, social and health education informs pupils about healthy choices and helps develop life skills.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The high standard of care, where pupils are looked after particularly well, underpins pupils' good personal development and creates a calm and positive environment for learning. All procedures for safeguarding pupils' well-being, health and safety are in place. Close links with a wide range of health professionals and external agencies ensure strong support for vulnerable pupils. This helps them to maintain a positive frame of mind and make steady progress in their learning. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Pupils generally know their learning targets for literacy and numeracy. However, in some lessons pupils are not involved sufficiently in evaluating their own learning and progress towards their targets. Systems to check how well pupils are doing are in place and beginning to help teachers plan pupils' next steps in learning.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, although two aspects are inadequate. The school's self-evaluation is inadequate and leaders and managers do not use challenging targets to raise standards. Self-evaluation is too general, lacks rigour and has failed to provide the senior leadership team with the necessary information to set challenging targets to raise standards sufficiently, particularly in science.

The recently appointed headteacher has an accurate view of how the school needs to improve and a clear vision for the future. The school has set about putting in place systems and support to improve achievement and standards and this is beginning to bear fruit, particularly in English at the end of Year 6. Tracking of pupils' progress is far more informed and provides the school with a clear insight into achievement across the school. However, the effect of these improvement strategies has not yet had time to have an impact on test results in Year 6 because they are relatively new.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	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	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

<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>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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

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

19 June 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Beckers Green Primary School, Braintree. Essex CM7 3PR

Thank you for making us welcome in your school and for helping us during the inspection. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking with so many of you. This letter is to tell you what we think about your school.

We think that your teachers want you to do well. You behave well and take care of one another. Younger children in the Foundation Stage are doing well and many of you older children are learning a lot too. This is because your lessons are interesting and you have work which helps you to improve, particularly in English. We also think that with help from your teachers, some of you can do even better, particularly in mathematics and science. You told us that sometimes teachers tell you exactly what you need to do to improve your work but that sometimes they don't. The teachers have plans to make the school even better but sometimes the plans are not clear enough about how their actions will improve your learning.

To make your school even better we have asked Mrs Scott and your teachers to work with you and your parents to find ways to make sure that you learn more quickly, especially in English, mathematics and science. We have asked them to use the information about how well you are doing, to make lessons even more meaningful and help you make greater progress. We have also asked them to make sure that you always know precisely what to do to improve your work and reach your targets. Lastly we have asked them to improve the systems for checking how good the school is, so that they and the governors can help you even more.

You can do your bit to help by making sure that you carry on working hard and thinking about what sort of things help you to learn in lessons and telling your teachers about these.

Christopher Deane-Hall

Lead inspector