

Barnes Farm Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115019
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311792
Inspection date	20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jeff Hoskings
Headteacher	Mr Tim Barrett
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Henniker Gate Chelmer Village Essex CM2 6QH
Telephone number	01245 467973
Fax number	01245 461947

Age group	7-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and how well the school's leadership promotes high standards and personal development. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussion with them, with staff and the chair of governors, along with a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Barnes Farm Junior School is close to average size. The school population represents a mix of social backgrounds, but pupils are mainly White British. Attainment on entry is above average, overall. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is also below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is below national 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 judges itself to be outstanding, and the inspection confirms this. The quality of education is excellent and this is the main reason why pupils make outstanding progress.

The attainment of most children is above average on entry. At the end of Year 6, standards are exceptionally high and all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the gifted and talented, have made outstanding progress. Almost all pupils reach at least the expected level for their age (Level 4) by the end of Year 6 in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. A very high proportion, more than half of the pupils, reach above average standards (Level 5). Significant numbers of pupils attain very high marks in the national tests for 11 year-olds. In mathematics, for example, more than 40% of pupils gained marks of over 90% and one pupil 100%. Level 5 is the highest that can be awarded at the end of Key Stage 2 and so the school's published results do not entirely reflect the progress that pupils are making, because some pupils are working at a higher level than this. Most pupils are highly numerate and many can read and write with exceptional fluency. In 2006, the school exceeded its targets for Year 6 pupils. In 2007, the school met its even more challenging targets for attainment at Level 4 and exceeded its targets for Level 5 in both English and mathematics.

Standards have risen significantly every year for the last three years. One way in which this has been successfully achieved is by organising pupils into teaching groups where work is planned to match their specific ability levels. For mathematics, and English in the upper school, pupils move classes into teaching groups matched to their needs and abilities. In English, those pupils who need additional support are regularly divided into small class groups where they are given additional help, whilst the rest remain together in small, mixed ability classes. In other subjects, the minority of pupils who have learning difficulties are very well supported in their learning through individual programmes and support systems. This helps them to make very good progress and explains why almost all reach at least the expected level for their age. The exceptional progress made by the higher attaining pupils is the result of carefully planned work that meets their needs and challenges them.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their behaviour is excellent and their attitude to learning is outstandingly good. Almost all love coming to school, because, they say, 'everyone is friendly and lessons are fun.' This is one reason why attendance is well above average. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities to act as helpers and leaders and carry these out extremely responsibly. The work of the school council is very productive and pupil participation has a very real influence on the decisions which enhance their daily lives. For example, pupils' ideas and suggestions have improved the outside environment and they are very successful fund-raisers. In class, they have interesting and challenging lessons and this leads to them concentrating and working hard. They enjoy the interactive approaches that the teachers use. Rather than sitting passively for long periods listening to the teacher, something they do very well when required, they are often invited to discuss in small groups, solve mental problems to stimulate their minds or become part of the teaching process. For example, one group was given parts of a sentence to hold up and their friends instructed them to move to make different word combinations. In another class, pupils acted out short improvised plays in order to help the teacher explain the difference between speech and narrative. They also enjoy the excellent opportunities to use information and communication technology in their learning; both as a teaching and a research tool.

The outstanding care and support systems ensure all have equal chances to succeed and all statutory safeguarding requirements and procedures are in place. Parents were almost unanimous in their praise for the ways the school encourages and supports their children. They greatly appreciate the help and information given to assist them in supporting their children's academic development at home. The excellent 'Learning Habit' books which children take home daily not only record their homework but also inform parents of the themes being studied over the year. These parent-friendly books contain very useful information about mathematical and scientific terms used in school and the reading, spelling and science programmes that their children follow. The parents very much appreciate the levels of care and commitment shown by all the adults that work in the school. One or two parents are concerned about bullying, but the school takes such matters very seriously and deals with them well. The pupils report that there are only very minor incidents and these are quickly resolved. Excellent health education ensures pupils understand how to lead healthy lives. They readily explain the reasons for taking regular exercise and enjoy eating healthily. They receive excellent preparation for their future from the many opportunities to work together and take responsibility for their learning. The pupils make good contributions to the local community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They understand the reasons for school rules and value highly the rewards given for good work and considerate behaviour. Pupils care for each other and are very helpful and supportive of those classmates with learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities.

The school has grown in popularity and numbers are rising. As a result, space is at a premium and this restricts opportunities in subjects such as art, drama and music. The curriculum is good because of the excellent provision for the core subjects and the excellent after-school programme, but some classrooms are too small for very successful creative work. The school hall is heavily timetabled for physical education and lunch arrangements. There is no other available space for drama or music, and so opportunities for these subjects are restricted. Teachers work hard to overcome the difficulties, but time is wasted moving equipment from room to room. Art facilities are poor in the smaller of the classrooms and they are not flexible enough for an integrated, thematic curriculum to be taught easily. There is no first aid room. Pupils' needs have to be met in a corridor. This is barely acceptable for older children in a junior school. Despite the problems with the accommodation, teaching and learning are outstanding. Parents wrote that their children are making very good progress at school because the teaching is so good: 'This is an excellent school and we are lucky to have chosen it!' Teachers' management of their classes is excellent and they plan interesting, challenging lessons. Pupils' academic progress is tracked very well, but assessment information is not used consistently across the school to help pupils to improve their work in literacy. Not all teachers give enough written guidance to pupils on the next steps in their learning and pupils' targets are not specific enough.

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and this is a major reason why the school has prospered in recent years. His enthusiasm and commitment drives the pursuit of excellence. He is supported very well by his leadership team and has developed a strong sense of teamwork amongst the staff. In addition there are excellent systems for reviewing and improving the school's work. As a result, the school is very well placed to improve further. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers tell pupils what they need to do to raise the level of their work in literacy and set them specific, short-term targets.
- Take steps to resolve accommodation problems that are restricting some aspects of the curriculum.

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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 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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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

21 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Barnes Farm Junior School, Chelmsford CM2 6QH

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. You were all extremely polite and I enjoyed meeting so many of you. It was very interesting seeing you at work in your classrooms and I particularly enjoyed watching the way you worked together in pairs or small groups so happily and well. I would like to say special thanks to the group I talked to who told me about what it is like to be a pupil at Barnes Farm.

Your school provides you with an excellent education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you extremely well. It gives you the highest quality support with your learning. You make outstanding progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach very high standards in all your subjects. You behave extremely well and enjoy your learning because teaching is excellent and you have a very interesting range of activities.

You are proud of all the after-school activities you are involved in. You particularly enjoy the visits out of school, which help you learn more about topics such as The Victorians. I was also very impressed with the quality of your singing as you rehearsed for the end of term performance.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading and managing it exceptionally well. Your headteacher is dedicated to giving you the very best education.

I have asked the school to make sure that teachers tell you what you need to do to improve your writing and set you targets for the next piece of work that relate directly to this individual advice you have been given. I also want the school to find out what can be done to continue the good work already done to improve the buildings, in order to make this an even better place in which to learn.

Once again thank you for your help. Keep doing your best and working with the adults to make sure that your school remains an outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector