

# The Butts Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 116025             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Hampshire          |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 312151             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 15–16 October 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | George Rayner      |

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                                    | 225                                    |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Ms Clare Simkin                        |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Miss Helen Barden (Acting Headteacher) |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 19 May 2003                            |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Bolle Road<br>Alton<br>GU34 1PW        |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01420 84102                            |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01420 84102                            |

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school is similar in size to other primary schools. Most pupils come from relatively advantaged homes. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning to speak English. A slightly above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has had an acting headteacher since the start of the current term. Governors have recently made a permanent appointment, who will take up her post at the start of the summer term.

## 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. Parents agree. They say that their children make good progress here and that they are very happy and well cared for. One voiced the opinions of many in writing, 'The staff often go the extra mile to make each child feel special and the children flourish'. This accurately expresses the school's determination for the security and welfare of all pupils to be at the heart of all that it does. It shows its commitment in its good care and support for pupils, resulting in their good personal development and well-being. Pupils show their enjoyment of school through their better than average attendance, the very good behaviour of the great majority and their enthusiasm in joining in with all that the school has to offer. Pupils' good awareness of the importance of safe and healthy living has recently been recognised by the award of Enhanced Healthy Schools status.

Since the last inspection, the school has worked effectively to overcome a period of disruption. The curriculum now provides good opportunities for learning and increasingly stimulates pupils by generating their involvement and enjoyment. Extra curricular provision and outdoor facilities have improved markedly. A more settled teaching staff has worked successfully to raise standards. Consequently, pupils are achieving well to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6 in almost all subjects. While satisfactory, achievement is lower in mathematics and standards remain average. Most pupils met their targets in English during the past two years, but fewer have done so in mathematics. Teaching is good but there is some variation in the pace of lessons, which on occasions leads to satisfactory rather than good progress. Improvements in assessment and target setting procedures have resulted in challenging targets for pupils. While these are used productively in many lessons this is not always the case. Consequently, not all pupils are clear about the steps they need to take to meet their targets.

Leadership and management are good. Governors have efficiently managed the process of appointing a permanent headteacher and have ensured effective acting leadership in the interim. The acting headteacher has quickly developed a good understanding of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. She has rapidly gained the confidence of staff, governors and parents, so that there is a strong sense of unified purpose. The school has accurately identified where it needed to improve the curriculum and teaching. The measures that it has put in place are now having a clear impact on the school's provision and performance. This demonstrates a good capacity for future improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children start school with skills that are below expectations in some years, but broadly at expected levels in most. Children make good progress and are working securely in almost all areas of learning by the time they leave the Reception class. The only exception is in writing, which is slightly weaker for many children. The imaginative and stimulating environment encourages children to explore the world around them and develops their independence. The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of all children and to stimulate their interest, promoting good attitudes to learning. The outdoor space is used well to support all areas of the curriculum and provides good opportunities for social and physical development. The focus on personal and social development encourages self-esteem and provides a firm foundation for the next phase of learning.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematics to the level of English and science.
- Ensure that the pace of learning is consistent in all classes.
- Make the use of assessment information more consistent in giving pupils targets and showing them the next steps in their learning.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects. This results in above average standards in English and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils develop a good vocabulary, which they use well to write for a variety of purposes. This includes interesting stories and persuasive pieces expressing points of view on issues such as whether children should have mobile phones. Pupils apply their scientific knowledge well to carry out their own investigations. While satisfactory, progress is slower in mathematics, so that standards remain at average levels. Pupils develop the expected range of mathematical skills, but do not always apply these well to solve problems. The school succeeds well in ensuring that there is no great variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils. For example, those with learning difficulties and disabilities make as good progress as their classmates, because their needs are carefully identified and provided for efficiently.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' cooperate willingly with teachers and make good use of opportunities to explore and discuss together. They respond well to the many opportunities for taking responsibility within the school and as one parent commented, 'The older children look after the younger ones. That is something special'. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They have a good understanding of their own culture and those of some others, although their awareness of other cultures within their own country is less well developed. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are sensible in the playground and appreciate the 'buddy benches' which were installed at the suggestion of the School Council. Pupils know about healthy lifestyles and enjoy physical education lessons and the extra-curricular sports activities. They have good awareness of the importance of healthy eating and enjoy the nutritious school lunches.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teachers often plan interesting tasks that succeed well in engaging pupils, so that they work with enthusiasm. This was seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson, when pupils thoroughly enjoyed playing the roles of interviewers and celebrities. In addition to the contribution made to their speaking and listening skills, this helped pupils' personal development through developing interview techniques and reading body language. Staff have worked together to improve the way in which they teach pupils to write. This includes ensuring that pupils develop good habits, such as carefully checking their work and editing it to make sure that what they write is relevant to their tasks. This is beginning to raise writing standards. Teachers are aware that they have not given pupils enough opportunities to practise using their skills to solve problems in mathematics, and are now focusing on improving this. Teachers give much encouragement, in

lessons and through marking, which motivates pupils by making them more confident and willing to try hard. Marking does not always give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve, however. Although the pace of learning is generally good, it sometimes slows during lessons, when activities go on for too long. This results for example, in small numbers of pupils losing concentration, or the more able ones not working at the pace of which they are capable.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is enhanced by the teaching of French language and culture, swimming and specialist music teaching. Pupils and parents greatly appreciate the specialist football coaching by members of Portsmouth Football Club. The good development of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum has recently been recognised by award of the ICT mark. There are effective links between subjects to make work interesting and enjoyable. The school is currently revising its curriculum to increase the opportunities for pupils to learn through interesting experiences such as role-play. In some lessons, this is helping to raise standards and having a significant impact upon pupils' enjoyment and involvement. However, plans and training for teachers to make full use of these improvements in all classes have yet to be fully implemented. Teachers and parents work together to provide a wide range of well-attended clubs, trips, visitors to the school and special events.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is very good. Pupils thrive in a secure, supportive environment and all adults know them well. One parent noted that, 'The school works very effectively with outside agencies and effectively involves parents in helping pupils to achieve their potential'. Vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties are identified at an early stage and good measures are undertaken to meet their needs. Policies and procedures to protect pupils and ensure their health and safety are made clear to all staff and are carefully implemented. The school has improved its procedures for tracking pupils' progress. The resulting good information to set pupils challenging targets, track their progress and show them how to improve are not yet used to full effect across the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Most of those working at senior and middle levels of management were relatively inexperienced when appointed, but have made good use of training to develop their skills. Subject leaders are keen to play a greater role in regularly monitoring teaching and learning, but some have had few opportunities to use their newly developed skills. Governors are well informed, support the school well and are willing to challenge and question it when necessary. The school's rigorous self-evaluation procedures have provided an effective foundation for securing improvement. This is shown for example, in the focus on improving the teaching of writing that is now having a clear impact on standards.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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 <sup>1</sup> 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                              | 2 |

### 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  | 2 |
| 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 | 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 |

<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>                                       | 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  | 2   |
| 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

29 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Butts Primary School, Alton, GU34 1PW

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and we are grateful for the help you gave by talking to us and showing us your work. We were able to see that yours is a good school.

You make good progress in almost all of your learning. We could see that the help that teachers have given you in your writing is making sure that you become good writers. We enjoyed reading your stories and pieces where you write about things like whether children should have mobile phones. You develop your mathematics skills well. The teachers know that they need to give you more chances to practise using these to solve problems, so that you can become as good at this.

Your teachers often give you interesting things to do and we could see that you enjoy this. You work hard most of the time. In a few lessons, some activities go on for too long, so a few of you find it hard to stay interested. This is because some of the brighter ones feel ready to be getting on with their own work. We have asked the school to make sure that all lessons have a good pace and help you to concentrate on your work.

The adults have made some good improvements. This includes the clubs, trips and special events. Some of you told us how much you like these and you show this by how well you join in. The teachers have also improved the way in which they check how well each of you is making progress. They do not always use this as well as they could to make sure that you all know your targets, or what you have to do next in order to reach them. We have asked them to make this one of their next improvements.

Some of your parents told us that the adults care for you very well and we could see that this is true. We enjoyed seeing how happy you are. You help your teachers a lot by the way you come to school regularly, behave well and work hard. Well done to you all and very best wishes for the future.

George Rayner

Lead inspector