

Boxmoor Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117107
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312493
Inspection date	17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Kinley
Headteacher	Mrs J Wright
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Cowper Road Boxmoor Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 1PF
Telephone number	01442 402244
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: why pupils' progress in mathematics was satisfactory in Key Stage 1 in 2007 but was good in other subjects and why standards in mathematics are better at Key Stage 2, the effectiveness of assessment in raising standards and the impact of subject leadership in bringing about school improvement. Evidence was gathered from observing lessons and pupils' work, scrutinising school documentation and records of pupils' achievement and progress, and discussions with senior staff, subject leaders and with pupils. 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, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This is an average size school, situated on the outskirts of the town in an area of social and economic advantage. It is popular and over-subscribed. Children enter school with attainments that are generally above those expected of young children. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language are much lower than found nationally. The proportions of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a statement of educational need or who join the school at other than the expected times are below average.

The school has been re-awarded Investor in People status. It holds the Healthy School Award and the School Sports Partnership Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

From the start of the day to the end, Boxmoor Primary School is a busy and bustling school, in which pupils have many opportunities to develop as learners and young citizens. In this happy environment they do well. Parents echo this judgement. One said that, 'Children come to school with a smile and eager anticipation of what each day will bring'. Due to the strong, focused guidance of the headteacher, who has a good understanding of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to be even better, the school provides its pupils with a good, all round education.

Regular and varied opportunities for all pupils to develop their confidence, as well as skills that they will need when they are older, make pupils' personal development a very positive aspect of the school's work. Pupils respond enthusiastically to chances to help run and improve their school and contribute to the wider community. They develop skills that encourage them to work and think independently from day one. The school council takes a good lead in improving, for example, the play facilities for break and lunchtimes. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is closely linked with the curriculum. Pupils show a keenness to transfer the knowledge that they gain in lessons to develop healthy lifestyles, to stay safe and to understand and appreciate the religious beliefs of others. Behaviour is good, attendance is above average, and strong relationships are developed. These are testimony to pupils' exceptional enjoyment of school and lessons, and its caring and sharing ethos. One pupil summed up the thoughts of many, 'The school is like a family.'

Secure procedures to ensure their safety and protection at school form the basis of the good care, guidance and support of pupils. Staff and pupils work together to support and comfort pupils who have worries, and this is strengthened by the school's close work with external agencies that provide specialist support. Academic guidance is good because pupils have targets that they understand and can work towards. However, these are not often referred to in marking, which is otherwise a strong feature. Work to break down pupils' targets into more manageable goals, so that pupils can see quickly that they are making progress, is underway and is an important tool for quickening pupils' progress further. In some lessons, pupils regularly assess their own work, which gives them more ownership of their learning. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils who find learning difficult because they focus on pupils' specific needs. The school is working towards providing similarly for gifted and talented pupils.

The good curriculum provides many exciting learning tasks from the time children start school. Because many lessons are relevant and presented in an interesting and sometimes fun way, pupils are motivated and regularly excited about learning. The growing number of opportunities for pupils to engage in cross-curricular learning is enhancing, in particular, their good personal development. Despite pupils' good basic skills in information and communications technology (ICT), the school's provision does not allow all pupils in classes to practise and refine their proficiency at the same time, which slows their progress. The productive links established with local secondary schools have enabled specialist teaching in a greater number of subjects. This has broadened the curriculum, raised standards, and demonstrates the school's good management. There is a good programme of visits and visitors. The good curriculum, pupils' good personal development and their high standards of work all contribute to pupils' excellent preparation for secondary school.

The good teaching builds on the exceptional start that children have in the Foundation Stage. The teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make consistently good progress in English and science through the school. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science, because of the strong teaching. At Key Stage 1, while standards remained above average overall, mathematics results dropped to average in 2007, because pupils' standards in number were lower. The school is addressing the reasons for this and assessments show that pupils are on course to reach above average standards in mathematics in 2008.

Pupils' good progress is aided by activities that are usually chosen well by teachers. Teachers take into account individual pupils' abilities, based on accurate assessments of what they know and understand. Pupils always know the purpose of lessons and what they have to do to be successful. In the best lessons, they are encouraged to work independently and pupils particularly enjoy problem-solving activities. These challenge pupils and enable them to use a variety of learning skills.

The headteacher's clear vision and focus for the school, shared by the leadership team, has had a good impact on the school's performance. A significant development is the reorganisation of senior and subject leaders into teams of staff and governors. It has resulted in a greater consistency of practice across subjects and year groups and is a key to improving pupils' progress further. The accommodation has improved significantly and is one example of the good progress made since the last inspection. All staff work well together as a team and are involved in school improvement. This includes the curriculum, which is evolving as a productive tool for learning. Governors increasingly offer focused support that ensures good leadership and management at all levels, and which secures the school's good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children are delighted with their school and their teachers, who make them feel very special. They settle quickly because carefully thought out preparations are in place for their arrival. Excellent management of the Foundation Stage, good and often outstanding teaching and an excellent curriculum result in a myriad of opportunities for them at the start of their school life. The 'five fat sausages sizzling in the pan' activity, for example, encouraged exceptionally broad learning and captured children's imaginations wonderfully. The staff's expectations of their behaviour are high and children respond and work hard, making a strong start to their personal development. They make good progress in all areas of learning, with children reaching their early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage and many exceeding them. The outdoor learning area broadens the skills that they learn greatly. Outstanding procedures are in place to assess children's learning so that the work that they are given is at the right level for them and they have clear targets to aim for.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision for ICT to enable children to develop and refine their competences in class groupings.

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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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	1
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	1

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	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

18 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Boxmoor Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1PF

I am writing to thank you for welcoming me into your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you and watching you working and playing. My special thanks go to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to tell me all about your school. You were very helpful. This letter will tell you what I found out.

Boxmoor Primary School is a good school. Your parents agree. You are proud and happy to be here. You are reaching high standards by the end of Year 6. This is because teaching is good so that you all make good progress. In the Foundation Stage, children get off to a fantastic start. You all enjoy your lessons because they are interesting and you are often able to learn things in fun ways. I like the way that you learn to keep safe through, for example, Hazard Alley. You know that the staff care for you and make sure that you feel secure. It was especially pleasing to see you learning skills that you will need when you are older, such as working in teams and taking responsibility for your learning.

Your headteacher does a good job. All the staff work hard for you and are always trying to make the school better. Mrs Wright and I agree that arrangements for teaching ICT could be improved by every pupil being able to learn and practise computing skills at the same time as their classmates.

I send you my very best wishes for the future.

Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector