

Bythams Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120506
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE LA
Inspection number	313642
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Martin Newell

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Patrick Candler
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Lockham
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Creeton Road Little Bytham Grantham Lincolnshire NG33 4PX
Telephone number	01780410275
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need are both similar to the picture nationally. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and, of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, only a very small percentage are at an early stage of acquiring English. The school achieved Silver Artsmark in 2006 and Investors in People award in July 2007.

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 with some outstanding features. Inspection findings fully endorse the school's view of its own effectiveness. Parents are very supportive and appreciative of the quality of education the school provides. One parent's comment, echoed by others was, 'A terrific school that I would recommend to anyone!' At the core of the school's success is the leadership of the headteacher, which has brought about improvements in standards, achievement and the quality of learning. This track record indicates that the school is well set for continued improvement and provides good value for money.

Attainment when pupils start school is broadly in line with national expectations. By the time that they leave, standards are well above average and the Year 6 pupils' overall performance in 2007 was exceptionally good although standards in mathematics were not as strong as English and science. This is because pupils' problem solving and investigative skills are not as well developed as other aspects of their mathematics work. The good progress and achievement of pupils of all abilities owe much to the good quality of teaching which challenges, motivates and enthuses pupils in equal measure. Equally good assessment procedures mean that staff have a good grasp of how well pupils are doing and use the information to set challenging targets, to match work to pupils' needs and to provide additional support when needed.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is never less than good and, for some pupils, it is excellent. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attendance rates are consistently very high. Pupils' knowledge of keeping fit and managing risk in their lives is good and the maturity and sense of responsibility of pupils is highlighted by the outstanding contribution they make to the community. There is little doubt that pupils' experiences and acquisition of key skills prepare them well for their future lives. The good curriculum on offer meets pupils' academic and social needs well and the wide variety of enrichment opportunities readily contributes to pupils' enjoyment. Care and guidance are good with aspects that are outstanding. Staff show high levels of commitment to encouraging pupils' enjoyment and achievement and are very effective in providing a safe, caring and supportive environment where pupils flourish. Pupils are helped to make good progress by being kept well informed about how they are doing and in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Leadership and management, including governance, are good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership, which is firmly focused on promoting the well-being of learners through the provision of a good quality of education. All staff work together very well to make this a reality. This is not a school that rests on its laurels but instead sets the bar higher in its push to move on to the next level. Part of this is the need for subject leaders to play a more proactive role in monitoring teaching, learning and standards, which at present is not robust enough.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provision is good. Very good procedures enable pupils to settle quickly into the routines of school life and they behave well and enjoy their learning. Once in school pupils benefit from good teaching and an exciting array of activities that enable all pupils to make good progress. A good balance is struck between teacher-led and pupil-initiated activities. This includes good use being made of the outdoor provision. On occasions, role-play activities

are not capitalised on enough to enhance pupils' language skills. The teacher and teaching assistant plan and assess together well so that all practitioners have a good grasp of how well pupils are progressing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics by improving pupils' problem solving and investigative skills.
- Ensure subject leaders play a more effective role in evaluating standards, achievement and teaching through more regular sampling of pupils' work and analysing test and assessment data.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Across the school, pupils achieve well. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage and by the end of the Reception year, standards are a little above what is normally expected for pupils of this age. Pupils' good start is built on in Years 1 and 2 and at the end of Year 2, standards are above the national average. Pupils' good progress continues throughout Years 3 to 6 and by the time that pupils leave school standards are usually well above the national average. The unvalidated 2007 national test results for Year 6 pupils were exceptionally high in reading, writing and science because of the number of pupils exceeding the level expected for 11-year-olds. Although standards in mathematics were well above the national average, they were not as high as other subjects because pupils' problem solving and investigative skills are not as strong as their number skills. The school consistently sets challenging and demanding targets for pupils of all abilities including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The consistently good and at times better teaching combined with rigorous assessment and tracking procedures are key factors in why these targets are met and in some instances exceeded.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is good, and for the older pupils exemplary, because they are keen and enthusiastic learners who show a real desire to do well. Pupils' love of school is reflected in the excellent attendance rates. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with some significant strengths. Pupils are reflective individuals who look out for one another and relationships are a significant strength. They have an excellent understanding of how their actions can affect others. Although pupils' awareness of Britain as a diverse society is developing, it is still work in progress. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is needed to keep fit, safe and healthy. They make an outstanding contribution to the community through their decision-making on the school council and carry out many tasks around the school with great maturity and enjoyment. Pupils have been instrumental in providing the school's 'trim trail', climbing wall and improvements to toilet facilities. They instigate many fundraising activities and participate in a number of community events. The school has recently acquired allotments where they are set to grow and sell organic fruit and vegetables. It is these types of activities alongside the development of pupils' key literacy and numeracy skills that are preparing them well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and contribute significantly to pupils' achievement. Much teaching is characterised by lessons that are packed full of pace and challenge and teachers go the extra mile in building up pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Work is well matched to the widely varying abilities of pupils in mixed-aged classes. Pupils play their part to the full in creating a highly effective learning environment and it is no coincidence that the good teaching of writing skills and investigative skills in science has seen a significant improvement in standards. Across the school, the skills of the teaching assistants make an important contribution to how well pupils achieve. Whilst the content of pupils' work is often of a high standard, expectations are sometimes not high enough as to how pupils are to present their work and the degree of challenge is on occasions tempered by an overuse of worksheets. Assessment is good because it is rigorous in monitoring pupils' progress and used well to guide and inform teaching. Marking of pupils' work is equally effective because it gives clear pointers for improvement that pupils readily take on board.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and adds much to pupils' enjoyment of school. Good provision is made for developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and computer skills. The school has accurately identified the need to set the bar higher in how these key skills can be better tested out through using them in different subjects. The school provides pupils with the opportunity to learn a foreign language and many pupils play a musical instrument. Good provision is made both for pupils with learning difficulties, and through the range of activities that are on offer for pupils with particular talents or skills.

For a small school, a wide array of enrichment opportunities is offered including visits, visitors, residential trips and after-school clubs, for example, gardening, sporting activities and foreign languages. The curriculum is equally effective in how it promotes pupils' capacity to stay healthy and safe and to value the local community as an important learning resource.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good with some outstanding aspects. This is a school where the individuality of all pupils is recognised and celebrated and where their pastoral care is given a very high priority. Pupils feel very safe and secure and are adamant that 'bullying is not a problem at our school.' Equality for all pupils is promoted very well. Excellent links with outside support agencies, alongside the school's own mechanisms, means that pupils' social and emotional needs are catered for very well. Procedures for safeguarding pupils, child protection, risk assessment and health and safety are all secure. Academic guidance is good because it impacts well on how pupils achieve. Older pupils have a good awareness of their individual targets for improvement, self-assess work and set their own targets. This impressive practice is not yet fully embedded across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher leads and manages the school very well. She has played a pivotal role in the good improvement of the school since the time of the previous inspection. There is a strong sense of team spirit, which is focused on making the school even better. Key to this is the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation, which is both accurate and, more importantly, is geared to bringing about improvements in the school's performance. A strong senior management team is in place which drives the school's agenda for challenging and aspirational targets, robust tracking of pupils' performance and for monitoring teaching and learning. Subject leaders have started to play a more active role in these processes but as yet they do not carry out enough analyses of data or sampling of pupils' work to give them a strong enough perspective on how well all pupils are achieving. Governance is good because governors are very supportive but equally play a proactive and effective role in questioning and evaluating the work and performance of the school.

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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	2

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	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	1
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	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

19 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Bythams Primary School, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG33 4PX

You will probably remember that I visited your school not too long ago and I am now writing to let you know what I found out. Before I do, I would first of all like to say a big thank you for making me feel so welcome. I have told your teachers how you were all so polite and helpful, that you said many positive things about your school and that you were great ambassadors for the school. I managed to talk to lots of you and it was good to hear how much you love school and all the different activities it offers and that bullying is not an issue. You will be delighted to hear that I found Bythams School to be a good school with some outstanding aspects!

I found that teaching is good and keeps you on your toes! All staff care for you very well and make learning enjoyable through the after-school clubs, the trips and the residential visits that they take you on. The school is good in helping you to keep fit, safe and healthy. Mrs Lockham is a very good headteacher and all the staff work together very well to help provide a good quality of education for every pupil at the school. There is a particular strength of the school that I have not talked about yet..... and that is you! I was impressed with your behaviour, your enthusiasm and high attendance rates. I found the way you add to the sense of community in the school and the way you help to make decisions, through for example, the school council, are outstanding! Well done!

I have talked to your teachers about how they can help make the school even better. They are going to help you to improve your problem solving skills in mathematics and to check more closely on the progress that you make.

Your headteacher and all the staff and governors want the school to be one of the best! I know you will want to play your part by continuing to work as hard and behave well. I wish you every success in the future. It was a pleasure and privilege to meet you.

Martin Newell

Additional Inspector