

Bure Valley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120911
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313788
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandy Nunes Vaz
Headteacher	Mr Keith Dickens
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Hungate Street Aylsham Norwich Norfolk NR11 6JZ
Telephone number	01263 733393
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

The school is of similar size to most primary schools. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and few pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Fewer than usual claim entitlement to free school meals. Fewer pupils join or leave other than at the usual start times than in most schools. Attainment on entry is slightly higher than expected for children of this age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It provides sound value for money. Pupils say they are happy and enjoy school. Their behaviour in class and around the school is good. They are gaining a secure understanding of healthy living. One pupil said 'We are very lucky to have a huge playing field where we can play games and get fit'. Nevertheless, their personal development and well-being is not more than satisfactory because their spiritual and cultural development and their understanding of staying safe are only adequate. Given their starting points, pupils' preparation for their future lives is reasonable.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Overall standards by the end of Year 6 are similar to the national average and pupils make broadly satisfactory progress. Standards in English and mathematics have improved over the last four years. The results in the 2007 national tests in English were much better than in 2006. This is because the school has recently focused on improving pupils' skills in reading and writing. The trend of improvement in mathematics is more gradual but standards in science have fallen over the last three years. The school has set reasonably challenging targets for English and mathematics and indications are that pupils are likely to meet them.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Whilst there is some good teaching, this is not consistent. In all classes, the relationships between adults and pupils are good and pupils feel safe. Teachers are increasingly using the electronic white boards to support pupils' learning and to make lessons more interesting. However, in too many lessons, teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. The use of pupil-performance information is inconsistent and some teachers' expectations, particularly of the more able, are not high enough. In contrast, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive sound support and make reasonable progress. There are many examples of good and informative marking in English, but this is less evident in mathematics and science. Many pupils are not given sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Individual, group or class targets are not routinely set. Consequently, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Systems for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils are robust and health and safety matters are dealt with effectively.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Staff are working hard to consolidate recent improvements in the curriculum and links between subjects are making provision more coherent. This is contributing to improvements in standards in English and mathematics. However, some teachers do not modify the curriculum sufficiently so that it provides challenge to all pupils consistently. The good range of clubs and visits promotes aspects of pupils' personal development effectively.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is reasonably accurate. Although the school was initially slow to respond to the issues from the last inspection and standards fell, recent changes are resulting in higher expectations and rising standards. However, the role of middle managers in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is underdeveloped. Currently, they do not monitor and evaluate their subjects sufficiently well or have an accurate view of the school's performance. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are supportive and committed to the school. Most have only recently joined the governing body. Given the continued trend of rising standards in English and mathematics and the proper focus to improve middle management, the school has sound capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use outcomes of all assessment information more effectively to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by providing more opportunities for all pupils, but especially the more able, to become independent learners.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels focus more rigorously on raising standards and pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics and science.

A small proportion of 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

In the 2007 national tests, overall standards at the end of Year 6 were slightly higher than in 2006 and broadly in line with the national average. The results confirm the improving trend and represent broadly satisfactory progress and achievement.

Standards in English are in the upper band of the average range. In 2007, Year 6 national test results improved markedly at Level 4 in writing and at Level 5 in reading. In mathematics, results were broadly average. However, science results continued to decline and although broadly in line with the national results, they fell into the lower average range. The continued decline in the science results can partly be attributed to the school not setting targets in science. Teachers do not challenge pupils enough in lessons and pupils lack the opportunity to undertake investigative work. Standards in English, mathematics and science in the current Year 6 reflect a similar profile and pupils are making satisfactory progress. The sound use of additional support materials ensures that pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Good behaviour, relationships and attitudes reflect the strong focus staff place on extending pupils' moral and social education. Pupils readily make friends and work together well. They enjoy school, but attendance is only broadly average because some pupils continue to take holidays in term time. Pupils show good understanding of how to live healthy lives by what they do. Fitness levels are raised through their involvement in a good range of physical activities and through competing in events with other local schools. Pupils understand the need to eat a healthy balanced diet. They have a satisfactory understanding of how to stay safe, recognise that bullying is wrong and know what to do if they see unacceptable behaviour. School council members make a positive contribution by identifying what can be done to improve the school and are proud of the difference they make. Activities such as these and their average standards prepare pupils satisfactorily for their next stage of education and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have adequate subject knowledge to teach the range of subjects expected of them. They manage pupil behaviour well. Pupils particularly enjoy the games activities and the opportunities to take responsibility. In most lessons, teachers make it clear to pupils what they will learn, and help them to assess how well they have done. They use resources effectively to add interest to lessons, although in some lessons, teaching assistants are not used as effectively as they could be. There are examples of good and informative marking, but this is not consistent throughout the school. It does not routinely provide pupils with sufficient guidance and the next steps to help and challenge them to improve their work. The planning of lessons is inconsistent and so does not always match work to pupils' prior attainments. Consequently, the needs of some pupils, particularly the more able, are not fully met and so their progress in some lessons is no more than satisfactory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum broadly meets pupils' needs. It supports their social development and their understanding of healthy living well. Planning ensures that all National Curriculum subjects are covered satisfactorily and wherever possible, links are developed between subjects to help pupils' understanding. This is beginning to impact positively on standards in English. There is a good range of educational visits, after school clubs and sporting activities. Pupils enjoy these opportunities and are keen to take part. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, but there is scope to adjust the curriculum more to ensure that it meets better the needs of the most able pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Secure arrangements are in place for child protection, health and safety and safeguarding pupils. The school makes a good contribution to promoting healthy lifestyles, especially through the range of physical activities available to the pupils. Pupils feel safe in school and say there are no serious incidents of bullying or racism. Staff know the pupils well and provide good pastoral support when it is needed. However, the level of academic guidance for pupils is not as effective. The use of assessment to aid pupils' learning is inconsistent in judging pupils' progress and in setting targets for individuals and subjects. The quality of teachers' marking and the guidance they receive is good in English, but of inconsistent quality across the rest of the curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The leadership team have successfully focused on promoting pupils' social development and their understanding of healthy living. They have established an inclusive culture and new pupils are made welcome. The leadership team has reviewed the school's statutory targets. These are more challenging and correctly

based on value-added projections. The leadership team acknowledges that the impact of subject coordinators in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is less than it should be and that teachers do not consistently set pupils challenging targets to ensure they make good progress. The governing body ensures statutory requirements are met. Governors are supportive and provide some challenge. The impact of the challenge on the standards the school achieves has not been as effective as it should be because measures for evaluating the school improvement plan are imprecise. Links with outside agencies are satisfactory but several parents report that communication between the school and parents is not as effective as they would like.

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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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bure Valley School, Alysham, Norwich, NR11 6JZ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our visit and talking to you. We thought that you were very friendly and polite. Your behaviour in class and in the playground was good. We were very pleased to hear that you like coming to school.

We were impressed with the lovely grounds and the areas for playing at break and lunch times. With all that space to play games it's not surprising that you develop a good understanding of living healthily and like keeping fit. Many of you told us how much you enjoyed the after school clubs.

The education you receive at Bure Valley is satisfactory. The standards in the school are rising, especially in English, but we believe they could still be higher. There is some good teaching at your school, but even more of your lessons could be good or better. We have asked your teachers to give you harder work and to set you even more challenging targets, especially in mathematics and science. We have also suggested they give you more opportunities to find things out for yourselves. To help them do this, we have suggested that the subject coordinators check your work more carefully and suggest to the teachers how you can be helped to improve. We hope that you will play your part by always working hard.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and polite when we visited.

With best wishes

David Wynford-Jones

Lead Inspector