

Bruton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123899
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314760
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Carroll
Headteacher	Anne Stephens
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002
School address	Higher Backway Bruton BA10 0DP
Telephone number	01749 812331
Fax number	01749 812816

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a larger than average primary school. The number of pupils attending the school has fallen in recent years. Children's attainment on entry is broadly similar to that expected for their age, but this can vary. A below average number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. The school holds the following quality marks: Investors in People Award, Healthy School Status and a Business Link Award.

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. It has some very positive features, not least excellent pastoral support and strong moral and social guidance which promote the pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. The experienced headteacher and senior colleagues have shown considerable skill in steering the school through a difficult time when there were fewer children living in the area served by the school. The school is emerging well from this difficult period, with teachers strengthening their expertise in teaching mixed age classes to restore pupils' good achievement and above average standards.

A few parents expressed concerns about falling rolls, sometimes linking them with mixed aged teaching and a widened range of pupils' abilities in each class. However, inspectors judge the school to have moved forward over the past year, a view supported by most parents who responded positively in the questionnaire. Several parents indicated that they were very happy with the school, and one wrote, 'I think Bruton Primary School is a very special place'. Effective links with parents and outside agencies play a supportive role with the school in enriching pupils' learning opportunities across a good curriculum. Interesting learning activities also contribute to the pupils' enjoyment of school, as seen in their good attendance, enthusiasm for learning and improving progress.

Good leadership and management sustain a strong focus on improvement, monitor provision rigorously, and use good self-evaluation to achieve clearly stated objectives. Weaknesses in teaching have been rectified to secure good teaching and learning across the school. As a result, pupils' progress continues to improve, enabling them to meet their suitably challenging targets.

Provision is good and children progress well in the Foundation Stage (Reception Year.) Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. It is noticeably improving in writing because teachers give clear guidance and set high expectations. Standards in Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, showing that most pupils make good progress in response to effective teaching. However, at times, especially in mathematics, not all pupils receive enough guidance on how to improve their work and a few lower attainers are not challenged at the right level, slowing their progress. Pupils show well-developed speaking and listening skills, especially in drama in Years 5 and 6, for example, when acting as embalmers in Ancient Egypt. Many pupils are very confident learners but their independence as learners is limited because they do not have sufficient opportunities to make choices for themselves.

In response to good care, guidance and support and an increasingly stimulating curriculum, pupils are enthusiastic participants and make very positive contributions to the day-to-day life of the school and the wider community. Such activities as 'Wake and Shake' exercise, country dancing and drama develop their excellent adoption of healthy, safe living. The pupils' good academic skills and highly developed social awareness prepare them well for the future. The school's proven ability to embrace change, rectify weaknesses in teaching and sustain strengths in pupils' personal development shows a good capacity to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well led. There are good relationships with pre-school providers, which contribute to a smooth transition for children to the Reception/Year 1 classes. Teaching is

good and, as a result, the children settle quickly into routines and make good progress throughout the Reception Year in all six areas of learning. Most children reach or exceed the expected learning goals for their age on entry to Year 1. The children share classes with Year 1 pupils, but careful planning and the deployment of the teaching assistants ensure they receive good levels of individual attention. There is a good balance between adult-led and activities children choose themselves. The imaginatively developed outdoor area has improved provision since the last inspection and gives children excellent opportunities for physical activity. However, children do not have ready access to outdoors without adult supervision and this limits their choice of activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- strengthen the way teachers match learning to pupils' needs and show them how to improve, especially in mathematics and for lower attainers
- provide more opportunities for pupils to learn by following their own lines of enquiry as they move through the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils achieve well and standards are above average. Children in Reception make good progress and many exceed the early learning goals expected on reaching Year 1. Good progress continues through Years 1 and 2. Standards are above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The progress of potentially higher attainers has improved recently in writing reflecting teachers' higher expectations. Most pupils continue to make good progress to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties also do well because their needs are identified and addressed early. The progress of a few lower-attaining pupils slows, at times, particularly in mathematics, because work does not match their needs precisely enough. Many pupils have good speaking and listening skills and learn well through drama, for example. However, their potential to develop their own lines of enquiry as independent learners is not always promoted to best effect.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils of all ages show a genuine respect for each other and all adults in the school and live up to the school's vision of 'Raising Achievement by Working together'. Good attendance, punctuality and, as one pupil said, 'interesting lessons which teachers make fun', reflect their enjoyment of school. Behaviour is consistently of a very high standard. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep fit, healthy and safe. Older pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities in an extremely mature manner that contributes significantly to the smooth running of the school and the safety of pupils. Responsibilities include the school council, which is valued by all pupils, and helping with the youngest children at lunchtimes. Pupils make excellent contributions to local and wider communities through, for example, links with a school in Zambia. Their mature social skills and good academic skills prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is typified by teachers using questioning well to extend pupils' thinking, valuing pupils' responses and using interactive whiteboards to reinforce basic literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers encourage good learning by nurturing the pupils' positive attitudes and by sharing clear learning objectives. They invite pupils to refine and improve their ideas through 'talking partners', whereby pupils discuss issues in pairs. Teachers and their assistants involve pupils beneficially in evaluating their own work and in setting relevant individual and group targets. The way teachers in Years 3/4 classes discuss targets closely with the pupils in a weekly target lesson is a particularly effective feature. Although not yet implemented to best effect in all classes, these strategies are successful in accelerating pupils' progress, especially in writing and mathematics. Whilst oral advice is good, the quality of teachers' marking varies across the school. Much of it is helpful, especially to support pupils' writing. Occasionally, however, especially in mathematics, marking does not make enough reference to pupils' targets or show pupils how to improve. These constrain the impact on pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enriched well. Pupils enjoy a good range of visits and visitors to the school, extra-curricular activities and opportunities to learn and perform musical instruments. Links with a school in Zambia and the teaching of French extend learning opportunities. There is a good programme of personal and social education, including residential visits, and these are very successful in developing pupils' self-confidence, responsibility and understanding of healthy living. Relatively recent changes in planning have strengthened cross-curricular links between subjects and have made learning more relevant, purposeful and enjoyable. These are clearly focused on raising standards and are having a beneficial effect, particularly on pupils' writing. However, pupils have too few opportunities to learn by following their own lines of enquiry. Mostly, the curriculum meets pupils' needs well; however, at times in mathematics, work for lower-attaining pupils is not sufficiently matched to their needs and slows progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Excellent pastoral care is a strength of the school. However, there is some inconsistency in the academic guidance pupils receive. Teachers give good oral advice to pupils about what to improve, but not always enough written or precise guidance on how to do this. There is a commitment by all adults to encourage enjoyment and achievement in pupils' learning. Staff present excellent role models and promote the pupils' outstanding behaviour and relationships. Most parents value their efforts and one wrote, 'This is a very friendly and welcoming school'. Very good procedures are in place to ensure that pupils feel safe and secure. Pupils are confident that they can seek help and advice from teachers and other adults when they need it. Good relationships are established with parents before children start school. These continue as pupils move up through the school and are supportive in promoting their care and well-being. Close links with parents and with outside agencies also help the school to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and senior colleagues have played a key role in steering the school through a period of change, initiated by a falling roll. By holding to high but realistic expectations, they ensure that the diverse needs of pupils are met. Staff at all levels work well together, helping pupils to not only succeed, but also find enjoyment in learning through an enriched curriculum. Governors give effective support. Good links with parents and outside agencies also contribute supportively to the pupils' excellent personal development and well-being. Self-evaluation is good. The school development plan is informed by well-established procedures for monitoring standards and ensures that appropriate priorities for improvement are achieved. These include more accurate use of assessment and appropriately challenging individual targets that have accelerated pupils' progress. However, whole-school targets are not always linked with sufficient precision to data of pupils' progress and this limits their effectiveness as a tool for raising standards. Improvements to the Foundation Stage, enrichment of the curriculum and strengthened teaching and learning show that there is a good capacity to improve in the future.

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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	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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bruton Primary School, Bruton BA10 0DP We really enjoyed our inspection visit to your school. We would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us about the school, especially members of the school council. We agree with you and with most of your parents who feel that Bruton Primary is a good school. These are the main things we found:

- Your behaviour and the way you live healthily and safely together and contribute to the community are exceptionally good.
- You are taught well and most of you make good progress and reach standards that are better than in many schools. Many of you have particularly good speaking and listening skills.
- You are enthusiastic about your school, enjoy learning and are respectful to the very caring adults who look after you so well.
- Your headteacher is a strong leader. She works very closely with all the staff and governors to make sure that you learn well and enjoy a good range of learning activities. They are always looking for ways of making your school even better.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do these things to help your school to become an even better school:

- make sure that all teachers challenge you at the right level and give you more advice about how to improve, especially in mathematics and for some of you who find it difficult to learn
- give you more opportunities to learn by following your own ideas and finding things out for yourselves.

If you continue to show the same enthusiasm for school and try to give of your best, you will help to make your school even better.

Thank you once again, and best wishes for the future.

Alex Baxter Lead Inspector