

# Beck Row Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124541
<b>Local Authority</b>	SUFFOLK LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	314955
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Taylor

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>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	160
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs R Almond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Oldfield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	The Street Beck Row Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP28 8AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01638 713001
<b>Fax number</b>	01638 717681

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Beck Row First School is smaller than average and is situated close to the American bases at RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath. Almost half of the pupils come from families on the airbases. Because of the nature of this work, pupil mobility is very high, with nearly a quarter of the school's population arriving and leaving at various times each year. The remaining pupils come from Beck Row and surrounding villages. A very small proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and of them, a few are learning English as an additional language. A further very small number of pupils from the Traveller community based in the village attend the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained the 'Investors in People' and the 'Healthy Schools' awards twice.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Beck Row Primary provides a good standard of education. It is led resolutely by an experienced headteacher who has high expectations and is always striving to improve what the school offers. By looking after her staff well, she has built a strong, stable team who are dedicated to meeting the needs of all pupils. The school copes well with the continuous movement of pupils arriving and leaving the school. Parents recognise and appreciate the high quality of this work. The school has a good reputation both locally and overseas.

Pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points when they enter school, in all year groups. They achieve well. They progress rapidly in the Reception classes and most reach standards typical of children nationally by the beginning of Year 1. By the end of Year 2, standards are broadly average in reading and mathematics. Pupils make exceptionally good progress in their writing, and standards are above average. Taking into account the very high mobility, pupils continue to make good progress as they move through Years 3 and 4. By the time they leave at the end of Year 4, standards overall are above average. They continue to be in line with national expectations in mathematics and reading, and well above in writing. Pupils' good writing raises the standards of their work in many other subjects, because they organise their ideas well and express them clearly. Pupils have weaker skills in calculating mental mathematical problems. Pupils' standards are above average in information and communication technology (ICT) and music. Overall, girls do better than boys. Innovative steps to encourage boys to achieve more, such as the 'Woodland Learning' and 'Mantle of the Expert' initiatives, are successful. They form part of a carefully adapted and good curriculum.

Teaching is good, especially in the innovative way writing skills are taught. This is why standards in writing are higher. ICT is used well and pupils are proud of their considerable skills. Pupils' personal development is good and there is a wide range of activities provided to help widen their perspective on life. Pupils enjoy these opportunities. They behave well and are keen and interested in lessons. They enjoy the trim trail, which is helping to keep them fit and healthy. The care, guidance and support for pupils is good. Staff are very considerate in the way they welcome new arrivals and prepare others for leaving. All pupils receive a Beck Row Bear leaving gift to remind them of their time at school. The academic guidance given in reading and mathematics is not as strong as it is in writing, so pupils have a more limited idea of what they need to do to improve in these areas.

The school's success is due to good leadership and management, based on a strong partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher and a staff team all working for the pupils' benefit. The school has diagnosed its strengths and weaknesses accurately. Governors provide an increasing level of support and challenge for the school's work. The school has a good capacity to improve further, based upon the track record of past success. It provides good value for money.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

There is a carefully thought out curriculum designed to help redress the weaker areas of children's knowledge when they first start school. Combined with good teaching, this provision helps them make good progress. 'Woodland Learning', where children learn through investigation and discovery in the grounds and in the adjacent wood, is a very effective method of capturing

children's interest. It helps to improve their behaviour and to develop their social skills. Children enjoy learning but their ability to listen is weaker, so lessons are appropriately focused on improving this important area of their development. Occasionally, the youngest children are not guided enough to listen when they should.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend the use of target setting for pupils, so that standards in reading and mathematics reach those in writing.
- Improve pupils' mental mathematics skills.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Many pupils of first school age join or leave Beck Row at different times every year. Taking account of this very high mobility, they make good progress and achieve well. All pupils make good progress from the time they start at Beck Row. From their lower than expected starting points when children arrive in Reception, they make good progress, and most reach the expected standards in the areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils' good progress continues and Year 2 assessments show, as part of an improving trend, that pupils are broadly in line with the national averages in mathematics and reading. They make exceptional progress in their writing, where standards are above average.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 and 4 from their starting points. Standards are above average overall and pupils reach their challenging targets. Standards in reading and mathematics are in line with those expected for their age. The school's evaluation of pupils' attainment in mathematics reveals that their mental skills are weaker. They continue to make exceptional progress in writing, and results are above expectations. Pupils' good writing raises the standards of their work generally. Pupils' standards are above average in ICT and music. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress. Pupils learning English and those from the Traveller community also make good progress because the school meets the needs of small groups effectively.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a high priority in the school. As a result, pupils are well behaved, polite, curious and friendly. A special effort is placed on valuing the beliefs, customs and experiences of pupils from the local airbases so that they integrate well. A focus on 'Thanksgiving' provided opportunities for American pupils to speak as 'experts' and help others to learn about celebrations in other countries. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they feel it is a safe place and they enjoy what they do. They readily make friends and contribute well to school life through suggesting improvements in the 'Talk Team'. Pupils make a good contribution to the wider community by raising funds for charities and through involvement in local activities, such as designing posters. They have a good understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives, including knowing about healthy foods, and this is influencing what they do. They are prepared well with the academic, personal and social skills they need for later life. On the return of parents from active service abroad, they often take some family time. The school works constructively with all parents to maintain satisfactory attendance.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are typically well planned with tasks that match pupils' abilities and build carefully on their previous learning. The teaching is particularly skilled at developing pupils' writing, which has a positive effect on standards in many subjects. It provides clear frameworks and guidance, and gives pupils something exciting and real to write about. This aspect was seen in Year 3, where a group of boys were keen to write to parents inviting them to their Greek exhibition. Teachers' questioning is good and this helps to develop pupils' thinking. The pace of learning is usually good but now and again, a task is not demanding enough. Therefore, pupils do not learn as quickly as they could. Very good relationships with pupils help teachers to manage behaviour well. The use of ICT is good in the way that it engages pupils in their learning, particularly for boys.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is carefully constructed to encourage, for example, a love of writing and reading and to appeal to boys. The school uses an innovative way of teaching writing, which includes pictures and much consolidation of what has been taught. ICT, both in its own right and taught through other subjects, is a strong feature where good work was seen. The teaching of mathematical skills through other subjects is not as strong, nor are the opportunities for pupils to develop mental mathematics skills. There is a clear focus on helping to keep pupils safe and healthy, for example, through bike safety and the 'Safe Routes to School initiative'. A good number of clubs and activities are on offer. Highly original school productions are musical highlights of the year.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils develop into happy and confident learners because of the high quality support systems. Particularly good attention is placed on welcoming new pupils and preparing others to move away to schools abroad. Pupils that find learning difficult are supported well, because their needs are correctly identified and effective support provided. Good links with outside support agencies ensure that staff develop their own expertise to help address pupils' specific needs. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning by supporting these pupils well. Procedures for keeping pupils safe and secure are in place. There are strengths in the academic guidance given to pupils, for example during writing lessons and through the marking of their work. However, pupils are not as aware of how to improve their work in mathematics and reading.

## **Leadership and management**

#### **Grade: 2**

The experienced headteacher provides good leadership. She values her staff, looks after them well and appreciates the wide range of interests and expertise they share willingly with pupils. There is a good working partnership with the deputy headteacher, whose talents complement

that of the headteacher. Senior staff leading key subject areas are dedicated to improving standards. However, they are not yet fully using data and information gained from monitoring to improve teaching and learning further. Governors are astute at challenging the work of the school, a role which the headteacher is finding increasingly valuable for improving the school. The school works well in partnership with other local schools and is an active presence in the local community. For example, being an 'Honorary Commander' at the air bases places the headteacher in a better position to understand the needs of American families and so foster strong relationships.





## 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 <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	3
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**

23 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Beck Row Primary School, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 8AE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited you recently. I am writing to tell you what we found out about your school.

We were pleased at how well you behave and enjoyed talking to you and answering your questions. We know you enjoy coming to school and were very impressed with how good you all are at writing, so very well done. We believe this is because your teachers give you exciting things to write about. The headteacher and all the adults in school look after you really well and this is why you are happy here. It was good to see how clever you were when you used the computers. The Diwali patterns Year 2 children made were lovely.

When you write your stories, we know you have lots of help and you know how to make your writing even better. We have asked your headteacher and everyone to tell you what you need to do to make your mathematics and reading as good as your writing. We think you need more practice at mental mathematics. We have asked the school to help you to be more able to answer problems in your heads, without using a pencil and paper.

Keep working hard and we hope you enjoy all the special Christmas activities ahead of you!

With best wishes

Mrs A Taylor Lead inspector