

Bulford CofE (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126309
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315487
Inspection dates	13–14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Judith Rundle HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Powne
Headteacher	Marilyn Brindley
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	John French Way Bulford Village Salisbury SP4 9HP
Telephone number	01980 632309
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Bulford is a Church of England, Voluntary Aided primary school, of slightly larger-than-average-size.. The majority of pupils come from army garrison families and between a third and a half of the school population leave or join each year. This is significantly above the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school is one of only 11 in Wiltshire to have a maintained nursery. It has attained the Healthy School award, Activemark and the FA Charter Mark. The school is involved in a local sports partnership and has recently taken part in the Intensive Support Programme. There is some imbalance between the numbers of boys and girls, particularly in upper Key Stage 2.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bulford Primary is a caring school where all staff know pupils well. The headteacher is instrumental in developing and maintaining a strong Christian ethos and places high importance on teaching the children good values. When looking at peace, prayers that pupils completed were touching and personal. Many reflect the children's own experiences of family members in areas of conflict. The school has a very high turnover of pupils each year because of large numbers of army families and changes to postings. It has developed secure and thorough procedures for the induction of new pupils and the buddy system is very successful in helping pupils to settle into a new school. Pupils take great care of each other and are successfully helped to develop respect and understanding of differences. They have particularly good awareness of other cultures.

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress in the rest of the school. Standards have improved, although still remain below average. Targets for improvement are set within classes, but are not used consistently or rigorously enough to help all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, especially the more able. Teaching is good in the Nursery and Foundation Stage, and satisfactory in the rest of the school. Where teaching is most successful, across all age groups, pupils have work that is planned to meet their ability level and staff have high expectations of pupils' capabilities.

The role of subject leaders has improved since the last inspection and they are focused well on raising standards in their subjects. Improvements have been made in the curriculum areas identified for improvement at the last inspection, particularly in the use of design technology and in art and design. This indicates that the school has capacity to bring about further improvements. Leaders and governors monitor the work of the school on a regular basis and understand the strengths and weaknesses of provision. However, systems are not sufficiently robust to bring about consistently good teaching and raise standards at pace.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage from relatively low starting points when they join the school. They have well-planned opportunities to develop a range of physical skills when using the computer mouse, painting, riding vehicles or when 'making snakes' with pipes and other equipment. Pupils make good progress when using mathematical skills to sort objects and have a good variety of opportunities to speak and listen to each other and with staff. Teachers and teaching assistants are particularly skilled at using questioning techniques to make children think and act for themselves, such as how best to put on shoes and socks. When a child got wet sleeves at the water table, he was asked, 'What should we do about it?' rather than given the solution. Pupils are fully engaged in activities and are able to sustain concentration for extended periods. Planning for the mixed Reception and Year 1 class is particularly thorough and meets the needs of both age groups very well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by creating a culture of high expectations.
- Ensure consistency in planning and use of target setting to enable all pupils to reach their full potential, especially more-able pupils.

- Ensure robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work to bring about consistently good teaching.

A small proportion of the 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

Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school in English, mathematics and science from relatively low starting points. The rate of progress in most subjects improved in 2007, with more pupils making good progress in mathematics during Key Stage 2. However, when Key Stage 2 achievements are judged against previous work, standards have been below those expected for the last three years, especially in science. Children with learning difficulties make progress in line with other pupils in the school.

Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have been on an improving trend. They declined slightly in 2007, which the school had anticipated. Standards remain below national averages at both key stages. Key Stage 1 mathematics and Key Stage 2 science are significantly below national averages. Few pupils attain the higher Level 3 or Level 5 grades by the end of each key stage. No differences are apparent in the attainment of boys and girls, as the previous underachievement of girls has been successfully addressed. Satisfactory progress and standards in literacy and numeracy mean pupils are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

As one pupil said, 'Bulford is an active school.' Pupils are very clear about the importance of being healthy and active, with large numbers taking part in sports festivals and tournaments. They enjoy the healthy food provided in the school canteen and make very good use of the well-resourced outside play areas. The lunchtime supervisors help make the dining hall a well-ordered and calm environment. Pupils behave well and talk with enthusiasm about the reward system of earning privilege time and subsequent choice of activity. They are also aware of school sanctions, although say they are only needed on rare occasions.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; the school has a strong Christian ethos and has good international links that deepen pupils' cultural awareness and understanding. The 'friendship stop' and pupil 'friendship patrol' are outstanding features of the good personal qualities exhibited by children at Bulford. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is consistently well above the national average. They feel they are able to make a valuable contribution to the life of the school community and show high levels of respect for themselves and each other.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

A few teachers demonstrate good teaching when they use questioning to include all pupils, ensure verbal input and plan work to meet consistently the needs of all pupils in the class. The more successful lessons observed included teachers and teaching assistants intervening at just

the right time. These ensured pupils had good understanding of their tasks and subsequently made good progress in their learning. Occasionally, however, pupils are left for too long without any feedback on their work. Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils. Some, especially the more able, are capable of attaining more. A satisfactory range of teaching methods and resources is used to engage pupils. Information, communication technology (ICT) is used appropriately in lessons to add interest and stimulating experiences. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively, enabling pupils they work with to be fully engaged in learning. Although the vast majority of pupils know their targets in English and mathematics, these are not used consistently in lessons to bring about improvement in standards. A minority of pupils say they find their targets too easy. Marking of pupils' work does not consistently make reference to targets or to the next steps in learning. Parents feel fully involved in their children's education and feel well informed of what their children are expected to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactorily planned on a rolling two-year programme to meet the needs of mixed-age classes. However, not all subjects have different work planned each year to ensure pupils make continuous progress. Planning for classes is not consistent. Where it is more comprehensive, it includes good references to how pupils will develop their skills and how these will be taught. The majority of planning does not make enough reference to how the needs of different ability levels will be met, especially in the challenge and extension of more-able pupils. The school makes appropriate use of local authority schemes of work to supplement their planning, particularly in literacy, numeracy and physical education. Good use is made of external visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum, such as the Foundation Stage walks around the village, and cultural development, with talks on other countries. A good range of extra-curricular activities is available to pupils in Key Stage 2. Girls love their 'girls only' computer club. Sporting activities have a high profile and opportunities have been extended well since involvement with the school sports partnership.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good procedures are in place to ensure the care and safety of pupils in the school. Safeguarding procedures are in place and meet requirements. All teachers know pupils well and are passionate about supporting the development of their self-esteem and confidence whilst at the school. Pupils say they are happy to talk to adults if they have a concern and are confident that any issues will be dealt with swiftly. Good use is made of Circle Time to build constructive relationships, as pupils sit together in a circle to discuss any worries or concerns. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early, with a secure system in place to track their support and improvements. Good links are made with external agencies, when applicable, and parents are very appreciative of the support provided. Pupils who join at times other than those expected have good support to settle into the school and specifically mention the 'buddy' system as being important to them.

The support and guidance for academic progress is satisfactory. Although the majority of pupils know their targets, these are not used consistently or rigorously enough in lessons or marking to bring about the necessary improvement in standards. Although some staff are starting to use strategies for assessing pupils' progress well and intervening to challenge learning, this is not consistently implemented.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear belief in the importance of creating and maintaining a strong caring ethos around the school. Leaders at all levels are selective in adopting and continuing initiatives so that only those that contribute to improvement are implemented. Features of the Intensive Support Programme are becoming embedded into the school's practice, such as the use of whole school targets at different layers. Curriculum leaders now feel a sense of ownership and accountability for their curriculum areas. They have a strong desire to raise standards further. The school acknowledges that targets for individual pupils are not consistently challenging and that expectations are not always high enough, particularly for the more able.

Self-evaluation processes have improved since the last inspection, but they remain insufficiently rigorous to ensure consistently good teaching. There is a satisfactory programme of monitoring by leaders across the school, although judgements are sometimes not challenging enough to enable teaching and learning to improve. Governors appreciate that their role is to challenge, and are developing this aspect of their work. They undertake an active role in school, regularly monitor its work and are ambitious for its future development. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and particularly value the caring, inclusive ethos.

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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
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?	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	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	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	4
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	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bulford Church of England Primary School, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 9HP

I am writing to say thank you for making us feel so welcome and for talking to us when we came to visit your school recently. I also want to tell you what we found out about your school.

You are lucky to go to a school that shows such good care for you and where all the staff help children settle into school quickly when they arrive. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you appreciate the buddy system and the friendship patrols. We think that you behave well in school and know how to eat healthily and live active lives.

Most of you learn new things in school all the time but we think some of you could be achieving even more so we have asked the school to look at ways of doing this. We want the school to have even higher expectations of what you can learn, to use your targets more and to make sure all of you are challenged in lessons to reach your best. You need to listen out for your targets and try to work hard at them in school and at home.

We have asked Mrs Brindley, other teachers and governors to look at your work more to share those things that are going really well in lessons. So, show them how well you can do and earn lots more stickers and privilege points!

I hope that you continue to work hard and keep enjoying school. Thank you once again for letting us see your school.

Judith Rundle HMI Lead Inspector