

John Buchan School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132396
Local authority	Service Children's Education (SCE)
Inspection number	320766
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Ministry of Defence
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	304
Appropriate authority	Service Children's Education (SCE)
Chair	Lt Col Chamberlain
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Morris
Date of previous school inspection	18–25 April 2005
School address	Sennelager BFPO 16 Germany
Telephone number	0049 5254 982 2273

Age group	9–13
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

John Buchan School is a middle school operated by Service Children's Education for children (aged 9 – 13) of forces personnel based around the Sennelager and Paderborn area. At least one parent in each family is in full time employment and there are no pupils receiving free school meals. Pupils are almost exclusively from white, mainly British backgrounds. There are 304 pupils on roll. Pupil mobility is high and fluctuates throughout the year depending on parental posting and/or regimental changeover. Approximately seventeen per cent of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These figures are in line with national averages. A very small number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. An increasing number of pupils have a parent on detachment which leads to specific anxieties. The school has gained Arts Award status.

Over the last two years the school has been through a period of intense upheaval and turbulence. This has been reflected in significant management and staff changes. A period of stability is now envisaged which will enable the school to develop and move forward.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

John Buchan School is a school that has gone through a difficult period of staff upheaval and transition. Over the last few years this has had an impact on the effectiveness of provision and outcomes for pupils especially in the lower school. On appointment, just over a year ago, the head teacher recognised that there was a need to provide stability and change the culture of the school to one where there is a greater shared responsibility. This has taken a little longer than expected due in part to the large turnover of staff and, in some cases, a reluctance to change entrenched practice. However, parents, pupils and SGC (School Governance Committee) are aware of the improvements being implemented and have commented positively that 'things are changing for the better'. Structures have been set in place to challenge weaker practice and establish a greater shared commitment to raising standards and improving provision. The recently established senior leadership team share the head teacher's vision for improving the school and are actively engaged in working towards this aim. Recently introduced procedures and systems are not sufficiently embedded and as a result have yet to make an impact on standards. Most of the issues for improvement identified by the previous inspection have been addressed or are in the process of being addressed. There is good evidence to show that the school is moving in the right direction. Staff morale has improved and there is a more visible commitment to improving provision and greater shared responsibility. There is also a greater sense of organisation and purpose which has improved behaviour, reduced bullying, sharpened teaching and management practice and placed the focus more firmly on learning and raising achievement. There is an acknowledgment that standards need to improve, particularly at Key Stage 2, where the curriculum and teaching has not always been appropriate to engage boys' interests and where weak writing remains an issue. Although pupils work is marked regularly assessment routines remain a weakness especially where teachers lack subject expertise. More able pupils also need greater challenge to maximise their full potential and there remain some areas of the school where management of subjects and teaching still need to be improved. However, the picture is improving as teachers and subject leaders rise to the new challenges being offered. The school has benefited from Service Children's Education (SCE) support through the difficult times and is actively engaged in an ongoing partnership to ensure current improvements are sustained.

The school is a welcoming, warm and secure place. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and their good attendance is testimony to this. They feel safe in an environment where adults are increasingly aware of their individual needs and concerns. Inspectors were impressed with their politeness and behaviour but most of all by the frequency with which they were greeted with a warm hello and a beaming, smiling face. Pupils' natural youthful exuberance and energy allows them to take advantage of the extensive school grounds at break times, lunchtimes and the increasing number of sporting activities on offer. This compensates in part for their inclination to eat unhealthily despite knowing the importance of the need to lead more healthy lives. Pupils particularly enjoy lessons where they can work practically and apply developing skills, express their creativity or utilise their own special expertise. They are less committed in lessons where teachers dominate, when they

are expected to write copiously without being clear as to why and where they have few opportunities to work collaboratively. They are appreciative of the increasing opportunities being offered to enjoy learning outside the classroom, especially when they can engage with the diversity and culture represented by the area of Germany in which they are living. These opportunities bring 'learning to life' and stimulate excitement and interest.

Pupils are aware that the school is changing for the better and are happy to be a part of it especially when they see the efforts being made on their behalf. As one youngster put it 'I've been to a lot of schools - but I'm happiest here'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards particularly in Key Stage 2 and especially in boys' writing
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good and enables all pupils to make good progress.
- Strengthen the contribution made by middle managers towards improving provision.
- Sharpen assessment and tracking procedures to support pupils' learning more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that achievement and standards are both satisfactory overall. The decline in standards in Key Stage 2 is being vigorously tackled to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across the school and not just in Years 7 and 8. However, the most able pupils in particular are not always being sufficiently challenged.

Pupils enter the school at different times and from different settings making the measurement of their progress complex and difficult especially when whole school tracking has only recently become established. Inconsistencies remain across some subjects. In general, attainment on entry is broadly in line with national averages but this varies from cohort to cohort. At Key Stage 2, standards are acknowledged as being below average in all core subjects with girls performing better in all aspects. The sharp drop in standards in English is, particularly, as a result of weak performance in writing, especially by boys. Staff turbulence has also had a negative impact in the last two years.

Standards at the end of Year 8 are broadly average; this represents overall good progress in Years 7 and 8 in relation to their previous learning. This is especially evident in those lessons where the teaching of subject specialists is good. The school's assessment data indicates that boys appear to make better progress than girls especially in those subjects where they perceive the work as relevant or where the use of resources particularly engage their interest. In subjects where assessment and tracking is more thorough, staff have a greater understanding of the rates of progress that pupils are making and are able to address weaknesses better by providing additional support where necessary.

Standards and progress in foundation subjects are satisfactory overall, reflecting the variation in provision across the school and the confidence with which teachers are able to teach those subjects where their subject knowledge is less secure.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school judges this to be good and inspectors agree. Pupils are polite, helpful and welcoming to visitors. Attendance is good and compares favourably with national and SCE averages. Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe in its surroundings. There are few incidents of bullying and this number is reducing; pupils and parents say they are confident that staff will follow up any concerns they may have. Pupils spoke positively about the usefulness of the anti-bullying week. A more systematic approach to induction with a new pupil guide and 'buddy' support helps new arrivals to settle in quickly. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are good. There are very few exclusions. Occasionally, pupils fall out at break times and the school has recognised the need to improve the outdoor play environment with a greater range of equipment particularly suitable for younger pupils. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and reflect on their personal and emotional well being in personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) lessons. They take part in weekly PE sessions in which they work on their fitness. Year 6 pupils also attend weekly swimming sessions. Although healthy eating is encouraged, on occasions, the lunchtime menu and the packed lunches pupils bring from home do not promote healthy eating. Chips, sausages, chocolate éclairs and crisps may appease a youthful palate but are storing up potential problems for the future.

The school council provides pupils with a good forum for expressing their views. It is gradually taking on additional responsibilities and becoming more involved in representing the pupil community. Fundraising for national and international causes and appeals reflects pupils' positive attitudes to helping others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have many good opportunities to learn about and experience the culture of their host nation community but they know less about what life is like back in multi-racial Britain. Pupils' achievement in ICT is a positive feature of the preparation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. About half the lessons observed during the inspection were good; of the rest, almost all were satisfactory. A small amount of inadequate teaching continues to hold back pupils' progress notably in Key Stage 2. Considerable staff turbulence in the last two years has also had an impact on the quality and consistency in teaching and learning. Support from SCE consultants and guidance from senior managers and some subject leaders is now focussed on improving the overall quality of lessons but inconsistencies remain. All lessons follow a suitable structure and although there are differences in the style of teachers' planning, all plans identify what pupils are going to learn. Some teachers

also make clear the steps pupils will need to take to experience success in their learning.

Effective teaching was seen in lessons in which teachers used their strong subject knowledge to match work well to pupils' learning needs. A lack of challenge for able pupils and the slow pace of learning were characteristics of the weaker lessons. There were limitations also in the impact that some teaching assistants had on the groups they were supporting and an overuse of worksheets in some subjects. The quality of teachers' assessments is also inconsistent and a priority for improvement. Most lessons contain a plenary in which teachers recap on teaching points and ask questions to test pupils' understanding; some lessons also involve pupils in reflecting on their learning. Pupils' books are usually marked regularly but the quality and frequency of comments written to guide improvement is variable. Some good practice was seen in pupils assessing their own work, for example in ICT, in design and technology and in English where pupils evaluate their own writing and identify the next steps to take to bring about improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory although the school recognises that, as yet, it is not sufficiently developed to meet the needs of all learners. Statutory requirements are met and there is broad coverage of a full range of subjects. Gaps in provision identified in the previous inspection have been rectified. However, particularly in some foundation subjects, there is also an over-reliance on worksheets and planning which has not been sufficiently developed to meet the needs of all pupils or makes best use of the resources available. In these subjects, the teaching curriculum is less clearly organised and insufficiently differentiated to ensure the progressive development of skills and understanding. In other subjects such as design and technology there is a well organised curriculum which is well matched to the interests of the pupils and supports the development of practical and life skills well. Provision for ICT across the school is good and all classrooms and subject areas have access to interactive whiteboards for teaching. Pupils are given regular opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills independently and in lessons. The effective use and application of literacy across the curriculum is an area which remains relatively underdeveloped.

The curriculum is enhanced and enriched by a good range of extra curricular clubs and visits. Many pupils enjoy the opportunities to participate in additional activities. They speak excitedly about their residential experiences in the Hartz Mountains, their participation at the Christingle celebrations in Paderborn and shopping at the traditional Christmas markets. Links have been established with the 'Goerdeler gymnasium' nearby which some pupils visit to enable them to contrast and compare their own school experiences with those of pupils in their host nation. The school is making imaginative use of the opportunities offered for their pupils to learn about the rich traditions and cultural heritage of the country they are living in.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff provide pupils with good personal care and support. Improved systems for managing behaviour have gained the confidence of pupils who now believe behaviour is better than it was. Displays around the school promote pupils' personal development, and self-esteem. A revised PSHCE curriculum is helping pupils to explore relationships and reflect on their social and emotional well-being. Pupils appreciate having the chance to visit the recently established deployment room where they are able to send emails to parents on active service. This means a lot to the adults and is reassuring for the youngsters who feel that, despite the distance, they are still 'in touch' with loved ones.

Procedures for safeguarding meet SCE requirements. Staff undergo child protection training and accident and medical procedures are clearly defined; there are several members of staff who are trained to administer first-aid. Attendance is monitored thoroughly and staff follow up on any incidences of unusually high absence. Academic guidance for pupils is not as strong. The school acknowledges that improvements are required in the support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and in challenging those who may be gifted or talented. The quality of intervention work in raising standards is patchy but better for reading than in the other core skills. The targets in pupils' individual education plans are not sharp enough and the overall quality has yet to be monitored and evaluated. The systematic tracking of individual pupils' attainment and progress has only just been introduced. A sharper system for tracking the progress of pupils who need to catch up in reading is a positive development. Senior leaders also acknowledge that improvements are required in joining up the learning experiences for pupils coming from the first schools or moving on to the high school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that this aspect is only satisfactory as middle leadership is not yet sufficiently well developed to ensure pupils make good progress in all aspects of their learning. The school has come through a turbulent period of leadership instability and high staff turnover during which standards were falling, particularly in Key Stage 2. The appointment of the current head teacher coincided with a period of intensive support from SCE. The head teacher has a clear vision of the direction she wants the school to go in. Staffing has been stabilised and the culture of the school has been transformed into one where collective responsibility and a 'can do' mentality are a clear signal of intent. There is a strong emphasis in the school's development plan on raising standards and achievement, improving the quality of provision in lessons and developing a 21st century curriculum which is relevant and meets all pupils' needs. Issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed or are in the process of being tackled. Swimming has been established as part of the curriculum and statutory requirements for collective worship are in place. There has been a focus on improved review and monitoring of subject provision which is currently at an early stage of development as middle management roles are filled and finalised. Assessment routines are also

established although not yet used effectively and accurately enough to track and support pupils' development and learning.

The head teacher's commitment and vision is shared by a determined senior leadership team and there is greater accountability expected from subject leaders to manage and develop their areas of responsibility. The school acknowledges that systems have been established but have not yet been embedded to show sufficient impact on standards. However, based on the progress already made, the school has a good capacity to improve.

Parents and pupils are generally supportive of the changes being initiated on their behalf and are appreciative of the efforts being made to improve provision, raise aspirations and provide a safe and caring environment in which learning can flourish. The school is working hard to develop community cohesion and is using its host nation status well to this effect. However, teaching and the curriculum do not currently enable all subjects to make a greater contribution to this aspect.

The School Governance Committee and SCE were concerned about the problems confronting the school. They are fully supportive of the current head teacher and understood the need to restructure the school workforce and re-focus the attention of both teachers and pupils on improving standards and provision. There is a determination to ensure that the school continues to attract good quality staff that will help in its drive to raise standards.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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/or disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	3
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	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 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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

12 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Buchan, Sennelager, Paderborn

This letter is to tell you about our recent visit to your school to inspect the quality of the education you are experiencing. The inspectors particularly enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We found what you told us to be very interesting and informative.

Most of you told us you enjoyed coming to school and had noticed how things were improving in terms of behaviour and better lessons. We noted that you still get upset by some minor incidents such as name calling, but felt that your teachers were approachable and helped you when you needed it. We were particularly impressed by your good manners – we've never had so many warm hello's or so many doors held open for us. You really are a credit to your parents and the school.

Although things are getting better, inspectors feel that one or two areas still need to improve and you too can play a part in making this happen. You are rightly proud of your achievements, but results in examinations in Year 6 need to get better, especially for the boys. In order to help you, we have asked your teachers to focus on making your lessons more challenging and involving you more practically in your learning. They are also going to ensure they provide you with clearer information so that you know how to improve. You also need to play your part by ensuring that you concentrate in lessons and work hard at improving the quality of your presentation and writing.

In speaking with you we found that many of you enjoy living in Germany and particularly appreciate the increasing number of opportunities you are being given to learn about life in the Paderborn area. We noted how excited Years 5 and 6 were as they departed for their shopping expeditions to the traditional Christmas fairs. Many of you enjoy sports. PE was identified as a favourite subject. You are aware that you need to lead healthy lives. However, not all of you practice what you preach and make unhealthy choices at lunchtimes. Sausages, chips and chocolate éclairs may taste nice and are great for a treat but eaten too often may not be a good idea. Perhaps some of you need to make more sensible choices.

You enjoy challenges and we are sure that you will respond positively to ensure that John Buchan School continues to improve. We are sure you will give your teachers all the help and support they need to build on the strong foundations that are being established by Mrs Morris and her team of teachers and helpers.

We wish you every success for the future.

Leszek Iwaskow and Robert McKeown

Her Majesty's Inspectors