

Burman Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104040
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323946
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Wheeler
Headteacher	Julie Carter
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2006
School address	Velsheda Road Shirley Solihull West Midlands B90 2JW
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, undertook visits to classrooms to look at displays of pupils' work, and held meetings with parents, pupils, staff, the headteacher and chair of governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, teachers' planning and assessments, the school budget and the headteacher's monitoring of teaching and learning. In addition, 81 parental questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the standards and achievement of all groups of pupils, with specific reference to the progress that boys make in writing
- the contributory factors to the school sustaining high standards over five years
- the quality and use of assessment systems
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in sustaining high standards and developing community cohesion.

Information about the school

The school is of average size serving a socially mixed area. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Hardly any pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Four have statements of special educational needs. The school provides Early Years Foundation Stage education for children in a Nursery and two Reception classes. Before- and after-school care is provided in the 'Beechwood Club'; this facility is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately. Since the previous inspection a children's centre has opened on the school site providing community services for children and families at the school. The school has achieved the Healthy School Award, Activemark and Silver Eco Schools Award.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This already highly successful school continues to grow from strength to strength as a result of highly accurate self-evaluation, outstanding and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and the staff's relentless quest for improving on previous best performance. 'We never stop still as the uniqueness of each child is at the core of what we do; we are on a constant quest to find the key that unlocks each child's potential,' is the chair of governor's summation of why standards have remained exceptionally high over five years. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and excellent teaching of the staff. 'This is a listening school which involves us in all aspects of decision making,' said one parent, speaking for many.

The school has many outstanding features.

- Exceptionally high standards and excellent progress by all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' very good achievement in reading and mathematics.
- Outstanding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils love learning, attendance is above average and parents say that children cannot wait to come to school.
- Teaching in all classes is excellent. Support staff make a very valid contribution to pupils' excellent rates of progress.
- The curriculum is exceptionally well enhanced by visits, visitors and the use of the outdoor environment.
- Assessment procedures are very rigorous and pupils know their targets.
- Pupils' personal development is exemplary. Their behaviour and their knowledge of healthy lifestyles and staying safe are first class.
- The headteacher, staff and governors ensure that systems of safeguarding and promotion of pupils' welfare and health and safety are excellent.
- Outstanding teamwork, excellent communication between parents and teachers and very good links with outside agencies and other schools are the cornerstones of the school's success.
- Excellent leadership and management at all levels, coupled with highly effective systems for raising and maintaining very high standards, ensure outstanding capacity for continuous improvement.

The leadership and management are mindful of the one minor aspect that needs improvement. There are missed opportunities in some lessons for teachers to inform average and higher attaining pupils what skills need to be included in writing tasks to ensure faster rates of progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strive to help pupils make their very best progress in writing by:
 - planning consistently challenging writing tasks
 - guiding pupils to understand exactly what they need to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Not a minute of pupils' learning time is wasted because pupils know how to learn and do so rigorously and with persistence. There is no giving up because a task is too hard. As a result, standards are well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing, where slightly fewer reach the very highest levels. These overall high standards have been maintained over the past five years and are attributable to:

- pupils thoroughly enjoying learning because teachers' planning is based upon very good knowledge of pupils' needs and interest levels
- outstanding relationships between pupils and adults, coupled with humour and encouragement, which enable pupils to feel very secure in learning
- very good opportunities for independent learning, characterised by pupils choosing their own resources and researching topics of interest, such as that seen in Year 1 on animals
- pupils' very high levels of concentration in lessons coupled with plenty of opportunities for 'hands-on learning' and group work.

Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning because they work in an exceptionally safe learning environment. They know about health and safety, staying safe and asking for help when they need it. Behaviour is exemplary and peer mediators quickly sort out any minor playground disagreements.

Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding. They contribute to the wider community by collecting for charities in Africa and Romania. Locally they are particularly appreciative of the opportunities to talk to senior citizens who visit the school. They have very secure knowledge of the wide variety of different faiths and cultures of multicultural Britain and the wider world. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have very high self-esteem, yet are respectful of and value each other and can all work together harmoniously, irrespective of creed or culture. These personal skills, combined with their high standards, mean that pupils are very well prepared for their next stages of education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

The outstanding progress of pupils is attributable to an exciting and exceptionally well-planned curriculum and excellent teaching. This outstanding provision is characterised by:

- staff, including support staff, who go that extra mile in ensuring that basic skills are taught exceptionally well: this starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children are taught very good learning habits. 'If you start something, then you finish it' underpins the practice in this school
- pupils taking responsibility for their own learning and thirsting to find out more
- exemplary staff intervention in showing pupils how to learn and how not to be put off by any distractions
- a highly interesting curriculum which captures pupils' interest levels through visits, visitors and hands-on experiences such as collecting and comparing different types of plants in the local environment
- early intervention in pupils' learning through links with the children's centre and special school: when staff notice their pupils are not making the progress that they are capable of, they act on it immediately
- the headteacher's organisation of exceptionally well-structured planning, preparation and assessment time where teachers and support staff plan for pupils' differing needs and ensure consistency of approaches in year groups
- teachers' use of very good resources, information and communication technology, books, story sacks and planning for outdoor learning
- very well-targeted support and links with multi-agencies for those pupils who are struggling, ensuring equality of opportunity of access to learning
- very-well-used assessment in nearly all lessons, although it is not as effective in identifying those who need extra challenge to improve their writing.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The curriculum is outstanding because it is tailor made to meet the needs of individual pupils. The very good provision of after-school clubs, including music, sports, dance and art, ensures that pupils of all abilities get totally involved in learning.

Parents and pupils are unanimously delighted with the top-quality care, guidance and support they and their children receive. 'We are one big family here; the headteacher and her fantastic staff always have time for us and our children,' said one delighted parent, speaking for many. 'We are informed of all the help we can access and the children's centre supports us in being better parents.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is at the heart of the school's success. Her enthusiasm is infectious and she has been instrumental in researching best practice that can be introduced to the school. Her highly astute leadership is underpinned by outstanding interpersonal skills. Active listening to all stakeholders is at the top of the agenda. 'This is a listening school,' is her mantra. 'Everybody has a valid view and it's my job to ensure that our families and pupils benefit from our knowledge.' Governors are very supportive of the school and have excellent knowledge of the school budget and subsequent deployment of resources. At the time of the inspection, all statutory requirements, including those for child protection, health and safety and safer recruitment, were met.

Strategic school development planning is very thorough, with regular monitoring of its impact on learning. The school development plan details clearly how high standards will be maintained. Outstanding communication of the school's aims, such as developing pupils as independent learners and ensuring that equality of opportunity is promoted very well, is at the heart of the school's work. The school is highly committed to promoting community cohesion. The headteacher and governing body analyse the effect of the very detailed community cohesion plan and ensure that outstanding provision is made for different faiths and cultures in both the school and local community. The school communicates its aims extremely effectively. All stakeholders are very aware that pupils' learning is at the heart of the school's work. Staff training is very high on the school's list of priorities and its impact is evident in the high quality of leadership and management from middle leaders. The quest for improving on previous best performance is at the core of the school's success.

Regular reviews of all of the school's work, linked with highly focused performance management and expert advice given by governors, ensures the school's excellent outcomes. Middle managers take their responsibilities very seriously and are learning

from the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities similar to others of their age. During their time in the Nursery and Reception classes they make outstanding progress in all areas of learning and reach standards which are well above those usually seen at the end of the Reception Year. This is because the excellent leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator ensure that children learn in a highly exciting multi-sensory environment where the uniqueness of each child is celebrated. Children feel extremely safe because welfare arrangements are exemplary and their needs are expertly met by highly skilled staff. Children are taught how to learn and this contributes to their success as they move through the school. Meticulous colourings of Elmo the Elephant, highly focused concentration on making pizzas and excellent teamwork in the 'safari camp' are just a few characteristics of children's exemplary learning. Children know what is expected of them because the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are modelled well by staff and their attempts at writing are very closely monitored and supported.

Excellent use of the very safe outdoor learning environment cements the learning undertaken indoors. Every opportunity is taken to ensure children apply their learning to different situations such as making sand pizzas. Children squeal with excitement when they draw their toy guinea pigs and eagerly talk about their experiences in visiting a domestic farm. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress because their needs are catered for in all areas of learning. A particular strength is the quality of planning for independent activities. This ensures that children's choice is underpinned by a clear learning intention. Not a minute is lost so children make exceptional gains in learning at all times.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They trust the headteacher and staff implicitly because their concerns are always taken very seriously. A very strong partnership exists between the home and school. Every effort is made to involve absent parents in their children's learning. Parents are given strategies to use with their children at home to improve both learning and behaviour and parents engage strongly with all aspects of the school's work. 'The school helps us learn with our children,' and, 'It gets better and better every year,' are just a few comments from highly delighted parents. Parents have no significant concerns about the work of the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Burman Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 81 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 170 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	3	0	0

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

21 May 2009



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burman Infant School, Solihull, B90 2JW

Thank you so much for making us feel so welcome in your school. We call it an outstanding school and you have contributed significantly to this judgement by your excellent behaviour, attitudes to learning and your very high standards in academic work. You clearly love your school and rightly so. It is an amazing place to be.

We were particularly impressed with:

- your hard work in lessons
- the way in which you love to write about what you have learnt
- your outstanding relationships with your teachers and one another and the way in which you care for each other
- your teachers work exceptionally hard and they teach you all exceptionally well
- your highly interesting curriculum, which enables you to be independent learners
- your school's systems for keeping you safe and healthy and preparing you for junior school
- the outstanding leadership and management of your headteacher and the senior leadership team who are always looking for ways to make your learning more interesting
- the excellent way in which the school works with your parents.

You have done your school proud. We are particularly impressed by the many ways in which you help your community, especially the work you do with senior citizens and your contribution to charities. You are very respectful of faiths and cultures and your displays celebrating world faiths are exemplary. You are true ambassadors for Burman Infants.

We have asked your teachers to use information about your learning to challenge you more in your writing, especially those of you who find learning easy. This will help you get even higher standards by really taking to heart and acting on teachers' comments in your exercise books. You can help by telling your teachers if the work that you are doing is too easy. Once again, thank you for all your help and good luck in your new school.

Yours faithfully

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley
Lead inspector

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