

Booker Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110260
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325118
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Carmen Rodney (HMI)

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	242
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Mr Gerry Palmer
Headteacher	Mrs Geraldine O'Brien
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 13 lessons and one assembly, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, and parents. The inspectors also carried out a learning walk which involved very short visits to lessons to focus on oral skills. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies and documents including the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body, the equalities policy, the strategy to promote community cohesion, and the questionnaires completed by 149 parents.

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

- pupils' attainment and their progress, and how well teaching contributes to their learning, particularly in mathematics and science
- the key factors having an impact on pupils' development
- the effectiveness and use of assessment, and the support systems to drive improvement
- the role of leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, in securing and sustaining improvements.

Information about the school

Booker Hill School is an average sized primary school. The pupil population is stable, but since the last inspection its roll has become slightly lower, as a small minority of families have moved to permanent accommodation outside the school's designated catchment area. Booker Hill draws its pupils from some of the most economically deprived wards in the borough. The school serves an ethnically diverse community, and the largest groups of pupils are from Pakistani heritage and White British background. A high proportion of pupils speak English as a second language, and on entry to the school a small minority of them are at the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, and an above average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Healthy School Award (2007), the Activemark (2008) and Investors in People (2008). It is currently working towards the Inclusion Quality Mark.

A new headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in September 2006, followed by the head of Early Years Foundation Stage and the Key Stage 1 team leader in September 2007. Developments since the previous inspection include major refurbishment and improvements to the outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and school grounds. In addition, substantial changes have also been made to all areas of the school's work. For example, the senior team has been restructured and a new curriculum model is in place. The School is a member of the High Wycombe Excellence in Cities cluster.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Booker Hill is a good and inclusive school that lives up to its mission statement: 'A caring, multicultural community in which we aim to realise everyone's potential through achievement, communication, friendship, trust and respect.' The school helps pupils not only to overcome potential barriers and achieve well, but also to develop into confident young people ready to move on to the next stage of their education. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the mission statement. This message comes across very strongly in the large and very positive response to the parents' questionnaire. One parent wrote, 'School staff provide great opportunities for children...to enhance their learning and enjoyment of school.' Another said, 'My child's every need is met. I could not ask for a better school.'

The school has undergone significant transformation since the last inspection, and this has had a very positive impact on pupils' learning. Pupils thrive in a happy and safe environment. They achieve well, with the majority doing better than expected. Often a significant minority make exceptionally good progress because expectations are high, and robust systems are used to drive improvement.

Strong leadership and management underpin the improvements seen since the previous inspection. The headteacher's exceptionally good leadership skills and distributive leadership model across the senior team are key factors to the success of this school. Clear roles and responsibilities, and a shared understanding of the vision for improvement now, tomorrow and in the future, mean that sustaining better outcomes are not dependent on one or two senior members of staff. This inclusive school applies the principles of equal opportunities very well. Data are used analytically to monitor achievement and ensure that all pupils have equal access to a range of support strategies. However, teachers do not always embed the use of assessment in their day-to-day work. The leadership team use development planning, training, research and partnership work with similar schools, and an outstanding school, to introduce new initiatives and develop good practice. As a result, the quality of teaching is good overall. Discussion with pupils, scrutiny of their work and observation of lessons indicate that they have a burning desire to do well. However, their presentation and handwriting skills are not good enough. Additionally, teachers are not consistent in developing pupils' oral skills, or using talk to explore and deepen their thinking.

This burst of improvements that have taken place within a very short time, when combined with the school's rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, shows that the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching to accelerate progress by:
 - using talk to explore learning so as to improve pupils' understanding and consolidate learning
 - extending pupils' thinking through in-depth questioning
 - focusing on handwriting and presentation skills.

- Embed day-to-day assessment in planning so that the information reflects the skills which pupils need to acquire and work which matches their needs is consistently set.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

There is a clear upward trend in pupils' achievement, primarily because effective steps have been taken to improve provision and accelerate their progress. Historically, attainment on entry is well below average, and in the current Year 6 it was exceptionally low. Regardless of pupil's starting points, their ethnicity or gender, all groups are enabled to achieve well, academically and socially. Effective systems help pupils to settle quickly when they enter the school as new arrivals with little English, or when they make the transition from one key stage to the next.

Standards improved significantly in the 2008 national tests, with pupils attaining broadly average results overall, though this was masked by significantly lower results in mathematics in Key Stage 1, and in science at the highest level in Key Stage 2. Predicted results for 2009, observations of pupils in lessons, and analysis of assessment data indicate that the upward trend is being sustained. For example, for the first time in six years, assessment information for Year 5 pupils indicates that they are working at or above age-related expectations. Similarly, the initially low targets for Year 6 have been raised significantly based on continuous improvements in their performance. Overall, in 2008, pupils made the most progress in English because of the focused attention given to improving reading and writing skills. The school is now focusing more sharply on mathematics and science, and is very much aware that there are weaknesses in the area of applying numbers and investigative work in each respective subject.

Pupils, without exception, display very good attitudes to their learning; behaviour is good, with some exemplary elements. All of this contributes to their enjoyment and attentiveness in lessons. They are very keen to learn, and nurture high ambitions for their future lives. Pupils' achievement prepares them well for the next stage of their education. The preparatory work to move them forward also involves them in activities such as careers day. They have a wide range of opportunities to take part in community and voluntary projects which involve dealing with money and working with various groups of people.

Pupils feel safe in school and are clear that there is always someone they can turn to if necessary. Pupils, like their parents, report that incidences of bullying or racism are rare and that any antisocial behaviour is dealt with quickly. This is because the anti-discriminatory legislation is systematically promoted with good involvement of parents, pupils and staff. Two incidents concerning bullying were brought to the attention of the inspectors who made further investigations. In both instances, it was proven that the complaints were dealt with adequately.

Pupils have a clear understanding of healthy eating and how to keep fit and active. They relish the physical activities, including physical education, the after-school clubs with external coaches, and brain gym, which they say 'keeps our brains working and helps us to get strong'. They make a positive contribution to the life of the school through the school council representatives using their position to bring about improvements in for example, the playground. Pupils' understanding of being part of a diverse global community is well developed through topic work, themed days and special assemblies, which are used to engage them in identifying with other cultures. Provision for development is indeed good, as observed during the inspection, when pupils participated in the Day of the African Child. The assembly provided a very good impact on their spiritual and cultural development; in particular, pupils adeptly used information and communication technology (ICT) to display their work and to communicate their ideas about Africa through poetry and music.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers manage their classes very well, and the very good relationships with pupils ensure that they learn in a well-ordered environment that is focused on developing learning. The system of organising pupils into groups for English, and the setting arrangements for Years 4, 5 and 6 in

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

mathematics, ensure that the most able are suitably stretched. Specialist focused teaching in small groups has benefited pupils who are either working securely within, or exceeding the highest levels for, their age group. Very good use is made of teaching assistants and specialist staff, including those supporting pupils who are at the early stage of learning English. The many teaching assistants make copious notes on gaps in vulnerable pupils' learning, which class teachers use to evaluate how best to fill in gaps and consolidate learning.

Team work among staff is used very well to support planning. Good teaching has the following characteristics: relationships are good; lessons are very well managed and organised; and teachers engage pupils very well through using the interactive whiteboard, practical activities and a range of visual aids. They use clear learning objectives, quickly fired questions and praise well to build pupils' confidence and assess their grasp of the work. Lessons habitually end with teachers and pupils assessing the skills learnt. Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses. First, talk is not used sufficiently for a range of purposes or to explore learning. Second, despite the fact that marking of pupils' work has a number of good features, and pupils understand the highlighted codes and how they can improve, there is too little emphasis on good handwriting and presentation skills; too often, teachers do not comment on mediocre and careless work. Teachers have good track records of pupils' progress, but they do not always use this information effectively in lessons to ensure that the set work is consistently well matched to individual needs. Consequently, a few pupils remarked that work is sometimes too easy and that they would like more homework.

A creative curriculum with specialist teaching in mathematics and French is broad and balanced and is tailored to the needs of the school. The curriculum is sharply focused on developing basic literacy and numeracy skills so that pupils can make faster progress. There is, therefore, good attention to developing links across subjects. This is helping pupils to understand how they can apply similar skills to all areas of their work. The wide range of activities provided beyond lessons is good and includes after-school clubs, educational visits and opportunities for pupils to access taster sessions of 'higher education' for young people. The impact of the new curriculum model, introduced in September 2008, is still being evaluated.

Pastoral care is well organised and is a strength of the school. There are good systems in place to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is proactive and responsive to the needs of vulnerable pupils; for instance, those with behavioural and social needs have derived many benefits from receiving specialist support from external agencies. Parents and pupils alike are very pleased with the way in which the school adapts its provision and uses resources to support those needing extra care and guidance. Further development is planned for the start of the next academic year, when the school will fully launch the personalised programme to help pupils overcome obstacles that might threaten their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has provided a very clear direction for the school and, as a result, leaders and managers at all levels are very ambitious for the pupils. This is a school that does not stand still. The leaders know the strengths and weaknesses; priorities for the future are identified early because there is good attention to planning strategically for improvement. The school has a very good knowledge of the barriers and is determined to dismantle them. Consequently, leaders and managers do not tolerate inequality. For example, data are analysed using a range of variables, including gender, ethnicity, special needs, language needs and free school meals. Findings and strategies for improvement are reflected in well-considered development plans that are focused on the needs of individuals and groups. Rigorous systems for monitoring and regular line management meetings ensure that that all staff are held accountable for pupils' progress.

The headteacher welcomes new initiatives, and this inspires staff to undertake training and research so that decisions about improvements are taken in the interest of pupils. This is illustrated in the choice of curriculum model for the school, and in the movement of teachers to a particular area of work or class where there is evidence of weakness so that expertise can be used to good effect. Parents appreciate this bold move, which they feel is helping their children. Governors are well informed. They challenge the school's work, know the particulars about achievement and standards, and are increasingly involved in evaluating performance.

Community cohesion is promoted very well. Pupils are exposed to other faiths and cultural traditions in their community, the country and overseas. Consequently, pupils' ability to see beyond the colour of peoples' skin is well developed. At this stage, the school is sharpening its evaluation of this area of work.

Safeguarding requirements are carefully maintained. Good systems are in place to ensure that all directives from government concerning the safety of children are fully met.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The dynamic and strong leadership of the team leader ensures that children get a good start to their education. The Early Years Foundation Stage is very well organised, and the excellent outdoor area – previously lacking facilities to stimulate children's learning – provides interesting activities to inspire children to explore all areas of learning. Improvements to provision have impacted very well on the rate of children's progress. Data show that, on entry, children have skills that are well below age-related expectations. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, they make good progress and reach the levels expected for their age, with a significant minority exceeding them. All of this has been achieved because of the meticulous team planning and attention to staff training and development, as well as the coordinated approach to ensuring that children are accessing all areas of learning.

Provision for child-initiated activities in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Children play well together and understand the daily routines. They self-select activities and respond well to encouragement and praise to explore and widen their choices. Staff, acting in a supervisory role, record and assess children's choices meticulously. They make comments and give clear explanations, but they do not always make sure that the children are fully engaged when using the facilities and equipment. Occasionally, the fleeting time that children spend on activities does not help in focusing their concentration. There is good attention to the children's welfare, and good risk assessments underpin children's movement in the outdoor area. However, robust play is occasionally unchecked.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents who returned the inspection questionnaire and their overwhelmingly positive response are a testimony to the school's work with their children. Their views confirm the findings of the school's own surveys and those of the interviews which took place with almost 10% of them on the second day of the inspection. Less than 2% of the responses included negative comments, and these did not include a common theme and are unrepresentative of the most parents.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Booker Hill 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 149 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 165 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	112	41	2	2

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.

30 June 2009

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Booker Hill School, High Wycombe, HP12 4LR

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school to find out how well you are getting on in your work. We enjoyed our discussions with various groups, and meeting you in lessons and around the playground. I am now writing to let you know what we found out about your school.

These are the things that the school does very well.

- The headteacher and all staff work very hard. Together, they are making sure that you can have all the support you need in order to make good progress. As a result, your school is providing you with a good education.
- Teachers have high expectations of what you can do. They prepare interesting and fun lessons which you like, and the practical activities, games and use of ICT help you to remember your work.
- The adults who are in charge have made sure that the school environment is safe and welcoming. They want the best for you. Your good and sometimes excellent behaviour means that you will not disappoint them. You enjoy learning very much and you all work very well with your teachers.
- You are happy, and as you go through the school you develop into confident and ambitious young people. You mix well with different groups of friends, and learn about people from different cultures and lands.
- There are lots of interesting clubs and residential trips, as well as opportunities to visit local high schools and to find out about going to university.
- You are very clear that your school is a healthy zone, and that chips and chocolates are not allowed!

Your headteacher, staff and governors are ambitious for you all to do much better, and they know exactly how to help you. So we agreed with them that to make everything superb, they could begin by improving two things. First, they can make sure that all lessons are good by helping you to (a) talk more about your ideas and work, to develop your thinking, and (b) do your best handwriting and take more pride in your presentation; and also by asking you some really tricky questions to help you develop and express your view. Second, they can make sure that they use all the information on how well you are doing to challenge you to work very hard. You can help by continuing to work with your teachers.

Yours faithfully

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector

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