

John Bunyan Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115007
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326107
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Sarah McDermott

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Veronica Clark
Headteacher	Mrs Amanda Woolmer
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
School address	Lancaster Way Braintree Essex CM7 5UL
Telephone number	01376 320272
Fax number	01376 550847

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

John Bunyan is an average sized junior school situated on the outskirts of Braintree. A very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and nearly all speak English at home. The proportion of parents who claim entitlement to free school meals is higher than average. More pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than average. Most pupils transfer from the infant school that shares the same site. The school has gained the Activemark and the Healthy Schools award. A new headteacher started in January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

John Bunyan is a satisfactory school that has made good recent improvement after several years of underachievement. The new headteacher has swiftly revived the school after a period of stagnation. She very quickly identified that standards needed to improve rapidly. She has tackled this challenging task with determination and rigour. Consequently, progress has recently accelerated across the school and pupils are now achieving as they should. One parent wrote, 'Thank you for helping my child catch up'. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below the national average but the school has raising standards as its key priority.

The personal development of the pupils is satisfactory. Pupils know how to lead suitably healthy and safe lives. A few pupils are over-boisterous and are not sufficiently aware how their misbehaviour hampers their friends' enjoyment and learning. Effective systems to manage behaviour are now having a positive effect on learning and most pupils behave well. Pupils say they enjoy being at school, but a significant number are passive and lack a sense of urgency in their learning. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously. They are proud of their success in providing an outside clock and more resources for playtimes. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage classrooms well. Positive marking and the setting of targets for pupils is evident in all classes. However, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to take more of a lead in their learning. The curriculum is now satisfactory because teachers are familiar with the expected national strategies and ensure pupils gain in knowledge smoothly as they move up through the school. There is still more work to be done to ensure what is being taught is consistently lively and engaging in all classes. The pastoral support for pupils is good because the school works well with outside agencies. One parent commented, 'I am so happy my child is at this school!' Academic tracking is satisfactory. Teachers can now identify exactly how any individual pupil is progressing, but this valuable data is not yet being used reliably by everyone to ensure work is matched accurately to pupils' needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A more stable team is now very clear on what needs to be done to improve the school. It has set itself realistic goals and is working methodically towards them. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher all are working effectively as a strong team. Senior leaders are now taking full responsibility for standards, but there is still scope for some subject leaders to increase their accountability and for governors to challenge the school effectively. The recent acceleration of progress across the school after a period of decline, including the rapid progress of Year 6 children, the improving behaviour and a renewed vigour in management all indicate the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by improving teaching and learning and ensuring the curriculum is consistently lively and engaging.
- Develop the roles of all leaders and managers, including governors, to take effective responsibility for standards and pupils' performance.
- Ensure pupils take an independent lead in their learning through teachers developing effective marking and setting personal targets that pupils' value and use to improve their work.

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

In the last three years pupils had not made the progress expected of them. With the arrival of the new headteacher and a much more successful effort to raise achievement, overall pupils are now making satisfactory progress, with faster progress evident in Years 3 and 6. In the past, able pupils did not make expected gains in their learning, but with a renewed focus on individual achievement these pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The school's data shows that standards in the current Year 6 are lower than national expectations for English, mathematics and science, but they are closer to average in other year groups. Girls and boys and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds are making equally satisfactory progress. Pupils who find learning and concentration difficult are given effective support to make similar progress to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are proud of being at John Bunyan. One pupil commented, 'the school is like a family'. Most pupils behave well, although there are a few who need careful management to ensure learning is not hindered by silly behaviour. In lessons, most pupils listen attentively, but too many are passive learners, waiting to be told what to do rather than taking the initiative themselves.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are respectful and sensible in assembly. However, pupils are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the faiths or ways of life of different people within the United Kingdom or other parts of the world. Pupils enjoy the physical activities in clubs and at break-times. They know what they should eat to keep healthy, although a few are reluctant to try the salads on offer. Pupils know who to turn to if they are worried and the older ones are confident about walking home safely if unaccompanied. They contribute satisfactorily to their school community by taking on small jobs and responsibilities. The school council sets a good example of democracy in action and is run very efficiently by its chairman. Pupils are confident about moving onto secondary school and are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching has improved and enabled pupils to speed up their learning and achieve satisfactorily. Teachers have responded well to support and advice from the local authority and now an increasingly number of lessons have good elements to them. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory with strengths in Years 3 and 6. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants. For example, when asked to devise school rules one pupil wrote, 'We must be nice to our teacher because she is always nice to us.' Lessons mostly move along at a lively pace, but in the less successful ones time drags for pupils and they go off task. Teachers are starting to extend their use of the interactive white boards to make learning interesting. Some teachers are beginning to use assessment data more effectively to

match work to each pupil's individual need, but this is not universal yet. Teaching assistants are patient and effective in helping pupils with learning difficulties engage positively in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Already a number of improvements to the curriculum have resulted in a better match of activities to the different abilities of pupils. Organising Year 6 pupils into ability sets for English and mathematics is now reaping rewards in improved achievement. The employment of specialist coaches has enhanced both the quality and enjoyment of physical education lessons. However, pupils are still not all sufficiently captivated by lessons and some report that they are boring. Training is underway to introduce a new curriculum from September that makes interesting links between subjects and engages pupils better in their learning. So far, there is an increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) and pupils' involvement in a local project to develop a piece of waste land into a nature reserve. Art lessons are popular and produce high quality work. The limited range of clubs is well attended, but there have been few educational trips to extend pupils' knowledge and experiences.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are safe and secure in the school's care. All staff have a strong commitment to help pupils to live up to the Code of Conduct, 'Be safe, be fair, be responsible.' The introduction of new behaviour management strategies, such as the Rainbow Awards and the Raffle Tickets, has caught the pupils' imagination and means the incidents of lessons being disrupted by inappropriate behaviour are greatly reduced. Incentives to encourage good attendance have reduced the number of persistent absentees. The pastoral care of pupils is good because the school works well with parents and outside professionals. Staff keep a close eye on vulnerable pupils and are particularly good at raising pupils' self esteem. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Improved tracking of pupils' progress means teachers can catch underachievement at an early stage. Accurately directed one-to-one tuition has been successful in raising standards. In a few classes pupils use their learning targets to help them move on independently, but this good practice is not sufficiently consistent. Marking is positive and encouraging but does not make it clear enough what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher are working well as a team with the other leaders to ensure pupils' standards rise. Self evaluation is very accurate. Having quickly identified that Year 6 were struggling to achieve as they should, the senior leaders have effectively accelerated their progress. The introduction of closely monitored termly school development plans to 'kickstart' the school has been successful in concentrating the mind on improving pupils' achievement. Already the good practice in the leadership of English and mathematics is resulting in improved standards. The headteacher realises the leadership of other subjects is under developed so has ensured this is a key priority. A recent audit of how well the school and its pupils coexist with different communities reveals strong links with parents, the neighbourhood and 'hard to reach' groups, particularly via the Police Community

Support Officer. The school is working to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of communities further afield. Governors are supportive and now understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they have been too slow to challenge the past underachievement and are only now beginning to hold the school to account for its performance.

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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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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

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**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of John Bunyan Junior School, Braintree CM7 5UL

Thank you very much for helping us on the inspection by talking to us and showing us what you can do. Your parents believe you are happy and in safe hands. We definitely agree.

We are impressed with the way Mrs Woolmer, in the short time she has been headteacher, has improved your learning and your behaviour. We believe the school now is well placed to get even better. The levels you reach when you leave in Year 6 are not as high as they should be yet, although this is something Mrs Woolmer and everyone is working hard to change.

You told us that you like coming to school and we are not surprised. You get on well with your teachers and friends. Most of you behave well, but there are still a few of you who spoil learning for others. We are pleased that you know how to lead healthy and safe lives. We like the way you are developing as responsible young people and follow your Code of Conduct. It is not every day that we see pupils investigating insects' habitat out in the school field for science. I know your teachers are planning more exciting lessons like these for the future.

To help you with your learning, I have asked your school to do three things:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science by making sure all teaching and learning is good and by checking that learning is fun
- make sure that all the teachers who look after subjects, and governors too, check that things are working as they should do and that you are reaching the right levels in your work
- improve the marking in your books and the setting of your personal targets, so you can improve your work without relying on your teachers all of the time.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We know that your teachers make your school a special place for you. You can do your bit by continuing to be positive, showing your best behaviour and by making the most of your time at John Bunyan Junior School.

Yours faithfully

Sarah McDermott

Lead Inspector