

Buckhurst Hill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115052
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326120
Inspection date	2 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	324
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Minoletti
Headteacher	Miss Leslie Howes
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lower Queen's Road Buckhurst Hill Essex IG9 6DS

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	2 February 2009
Inspection number	326120

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the standard of pupils' personal development and well-being; the quality of the curriculum; the effectiveness of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage; and how the school measures and improves its effectiveness. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school, serving a residential area of Buckhurst Hill. Fewer children than average are eligible for free school meals. About a quarter of pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic groups but no pupils are at the early stages of learning to speak English. When children start the Early Years Foundation Stage in their Reception Year, they have a wide spread of skills and abilities which, overall, are a little below the levels expected for four-year-olds. An average number of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most of these pupils receive help for behaviour, moderate learning difficulties, or speech and communication difficulties. The school has an award-winning learning support centre which provides resources for its own pupils and many other local schools. Over the past few terms there has been a greater number of staff changes than is typical for the school, with around half the current teaching staff being new or temporary appointments.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Buckhurst Hill Primary is fully justified in considering itself a good school. It is led extremely well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Under their guidance the school has continued to build on the strengths that were identified when it was last inspected in 2006. As then, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. These result from the excellent ways in which adults care for, support and guide pupils. The school has established a strong partnership with parents. Those who contributed their opinions to the inspection were overwhelmingly positive. The views of one parent were echoed by many others: 'A very safe place to be, a very well led and very well managed school.'

Pupils' academic achievements are good. They make good progress as they move through the school. By the time they start Year 1, most reach or exceed the levels expected nationally. In the school's assessments of pupils at the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been above the national average for the past three years. Last year's writing results were particularly notable because pupils' standards considerably exceeded national averages and, contrary to the national picture, fully matched their reading abilities. The school's performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science has also been above or well above average in recent years. In the years for which national comparisons are available, pupils made faster progress between Year 3 and Year 6 than in most other schools. The school's tracking of the progress of current pupils shows that those in Year 6 are on course to reach above average standards again this year.

Pupils of all capabilities learn efficiently because teaching is good. School leaders have coped well with quite a high number of staff changes in the past few terms in what had previously been very stable staffing. Senior staff have provided good continuity for pupils. New or less experienced teachers are paired with a mentor who is well established in the school, so that their induction is smooth. Careful checks made by the school show that, while the quality of teaching is good overall, it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding; inspection findings endorse this view. Senior managers are aiming to improve any teaching that is no better than satisfactory so that learning is accelerated. They correctly see this as a vital step towards raising standards further. Lessons are well organised and interesting. They are characterised by high quality relationships between staff and pupils and good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants. The best teaching in the school is dynamic and well paced and the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. Pupils respond particularly well to practical and problem-solving tasks; in such a lesson in mathematics, one commented happily, 'That was quite challenging!' The quality of marking varies considerably. For the most part, pupils are given good oral and written guidance on their progress. In some classes, high quality written feedback in pupils' books is a strong feature, but practice is not consistent. The main reason for this is that some of the newer staff have not fully adopted the school's policy and expectations in this area.

The school has worked successfully since its last inspection to enhance its curriculum, which is now outstanding. The impact of this work can already be seen, for example, in the success of the project to improve writing standards and good attention to the needs of pupils with particular gifts or talents. Other initiatives include an increased focus on the practical and investigative aspects of mathematics and moves to create further links between subjects. While these actions are yet to have a full impact on raising standards, they are already having a positive effect on pupils' enjoyment of learning and their motivation. There is a very wide range of extra activities such as clubs and visits that also benefit pupils. The provision of resources for pupils who

require additional adult help in school is of high quality. The development of the learning support centre resulted partly from the school's wish to provide as well as possible for pupils with autism. The resulting sensory room and facilities for music therapy and play therapy greatly benefit pupils at this school. Additionally, they bring pupils into contact with their counterparts in a wide range of other local schools when these pupils visit Buckhurst Hill. This helps develop confidence and social skills.

The school includes pupils from all backgrounds and all abilities equally well. It has appropriate procedures for safeguarding pupils and promoting their health and safety. The staff ensure that pupils' personal development is first rate. Consistently high attendance levels demonstrate the commitment of pupils and their families to education. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are caring, sensible and articulate young people. Several commented on how much they enjoy assemblies because they give them opportunities to discuss a wide range of issues. They show huge enjoyment of school and behaviour is extremely good. Parents and pupils alike comment that, on the rare occasions that bullying or racism occur, they can rely on adults in the school to put things right. Several parents wrote to inspectors mentioning how impressed they have been with the procedures in place to sort out any problems.

Pupils take full advantage of a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community. Their cultural development is enhanced by links with children and former staff in contrasting locations which include Sri Lanka and Australia. Events such as a highly successful 'Men at School' day, invitations to grandparents to join activities and contacts with local businesses enable pupils to mix regularly with a wide cross-section of the local community. Pupils have an extremely good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, recognised by an ActiveMark national award. The school has promoted the importance of a healthy diet through improvements to school meals, as a result of which many more pupils now take a school lunch. Pupils' good academic achievements combine very successfully with their excellent personal qualities, so that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Senior staff, including key subject leaders, have a good understanding of the school's effectiveness. This provides an accurate view of strengths and areas for further development. For example, the plan to raise attainment further is very well focused on how pupils can be helped to make even more rapid progress and includes challenging targets. The good range of local, national and international links mean that the school plays an effective role in developing community cohesion. However, an explicit strategy to evaluate the impact of this aspect of the school's work is less well developed. Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the school. They are very supportive and also questioning and challenging as they fulfil their roles as 'critical friends' to the staff. The positive impact of the school's leaders can be seen in features such as the improvements to the curriculum and the rise in writing standards. Recent staff changes have meant that some initiatives have not moved quite as fast as staff would wish so that, while the impact of leadership and management is good, it is not yet outstanding. However, the track record of recent years demonstrates that the school is well placed to continue to improve in future

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Reception Year is characterised by good management, good teaching and well planned activities. Parents are very positive about the start their children receive. 'We have been absolutely delighted with the way our son has settled into school,' was a typical comment.

Several parents also mentioned the success of the system by which new entrants meet an older 'buddy' who helps them get used to school. Children make good progress across all areas of learning. Their personal, social and emotional development is especially good. A current initiative is under way to improve writing standards further, as recent standards have been below the local authority average.

The three Early Years Foundation Stage classes work closely together. A good balance is struck between activities which are led by adults and those which children can choose for themselves. Adults are prepared to be flexible about changing plans spontaneously when this is desirable. For example, activities on the day of the inspection rightly centred on enabling the children to explore and enjoy the heavy overnight snowfall. Great fun was had by all and adults exploited opportunities to extend children's language and general knowledge while they played and worked in the snow. The children's behaviour is excellent and they quickly learn to share and take turns. The outdoor area is well resourced and well used to ensure learning flows freely between indoors and out. Children's achievements are noted and recorded regularly and the school is refining the ways it tracks overall progress in this age group. In this way it is providing good baseline information from which to measure children's later achievements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the drive for improvement in teaching results in a higher proportion of lessons that are good or outstanding.
- Strengthen consistency in learning by ensuring that the excellent practice in giving written feedback to pupils on their work is provided for all classes, including those led by new or temporary staff.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	1
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**

3 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Buckhurst Hill Community Primary School, Buckhurst Hill, IG9 6DS

Thank you all for your welcome and help when Mr Hare and I visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting such a splendid group of sociable and well-behaved young people. Well done for making it into school through all the snow! This letter is to tell you about some of the best things we found during our visit and a couple of areas where we have asked your teachers to continue to improve.

You and your parents told us how much you enjoy your school. The children in Reception settle into school quickly and get a good start to their education. We were pleased to hear how well you understand how to lead safe and healthy lives. You have plenty of opportunities to share your views with the staff and to work with your local community.

Your school provides you with a good education. In spite of having quite a few changes to the teaching staff over the past few terms, you all make good progress in your work. Standards are above average. Miss Howes and Mrs Elliott are determined that your lessons can be even better and we agree. The staff have planned an excellent range of activities for you and we have asked them to carry on making sure that you learn as much as you possibly can from these. We were delighted to see how well you are working at improving your writing standards, so keep up this good work. We noticed that when the teachers mark your books, many of you receive really useful comments that help you to improve your work. We have asked the staff to check that this happens in all classes. You can help by reading and acting on any comments your teachers make and listening carefully when they give you advice.

Your school is very well led. The staff and governors work well as a big team and make sure your school is an interesting, safe and exciting place. They care for you all extremely well and so your personal development is first rate. We hope you carry on enjoying all that the school offers you.

We send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ranger

Lead inspector