

# Belswains Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117365
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326588
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Paull

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	235
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ray Blake
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Eileen Anderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Barnfield Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP3 9QJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 264324
<b>Fax number</b>	01442 260137

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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2009
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is available for three to five year olds in the school's own Nursery and Reception classes. The school also runs its own breakfast club. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, although an average proportion are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is also average, although none is at an early stage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils who have identified learning difficulties is above average, most of which relate to language and communication. Pupils' attainment on entry covers a wide range, although it is below average overall.

The school has received Activemark, Healthy Schools and awards for the quality of its provision in information and communication technology. It also holds current Investors in People status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Belswains is a good school, which matches the findings of its own careful evaluation. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leaders are a strong team who identify whatever needs to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of provision. Their successful record of making improvements suggests a good capacity to succeed. Governors also carry out their statutory and other responsibilities well. Parents recognise this effectiveness and the overwhelming majority indicate support for the school. They are very pleased with what it offers their children. A typical comment states, 'I have been extremely pleased with all aspects of the school, the teaching, welfare and the responses of the leadership team to everything'.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their behaviour and their attitudes to learning are often outstanding. Nearly all of them say they thoroughly enjoy school. Standards, whilst broadly average overall, are improving and results show that, by the time they leave in Year 6, all pupils, including those who find learning hard make good progress. Senior leaders, working together with subject leaders and staff at all levels, have rigorously analysed pupils' performance to identify what can be improved. They have introduced initiatives to increase pupils' phonic skills, mathematical development, provision for summer born pupils and boys' writing. All of this is bearing fruit, as shown in individual case studies used to check the impact on individual pupil's work. Assessments in Year 2 indicate that, although standards are below average overall, progress is good and pupils' reading is a strength.

Teaching and learning are good, and reflect the school's careful planning and well organised curriculum. Marking is carried out promptly and always informs pupils how well they are succeeding and why. Sometimes it is exemplary, offering details about what they could do to improve their work and what the next step will be. However, teaching is a little inconsistent. It is nearly always good, but ranges from occasional lessons that are satisfactory to some which are outstanding. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not always succeed in holding some pupils' attention all the time. In these cases, while it remains satisfactory, progress is not as rapid as it might be. Care, guidance and support are good. Senior and administrative staff have put much effort into attempts to raise attendance, which is satisfactory, although not all strategies available nationally have yet been tried. While most pupils attend well, some resistance remains apparent from a few families. This reduces figures to below average. New systems for analysing pupils' progress are being used effectively by staff at all levels of management to set pupils challenging targets and encourage them to improve. Statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils' personal well-being are met. This includes the school's successful breakfast club that provides its children with a healthy breakfast, a smooth start to the day and thereby assists with their readiness to learn. These levels of care contribute much to pupils' strong feelings of contentment and safety. By Year 6, pupils are very willing to contribute much of their time to helping younger children and they do so responsibly and effectively.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Close links with parents ensure that children have a settled start when they enter the Nursery class. A good balance exists throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage between activities that children initiate themselves and those decided by the adults. This is ensuring that children are interested in their work and play, so effective learning occurs. Nursery and Reception children have access to well laid out and resourced outside areas, so activity can flow easily

from indoors. Good quality teaching ensures children make good progress despite entering with standards that are often below those expected of children of this age. Teaching is often outstanding in the Reception class, where the adults keep up a constant flow of talk to children, never missing an opportunity to address language requirements and to develop vocabulary. Despite this strength in teaching, several children do not completely reach all the age related goals by the time they enter Year 1. This is particularly the case in some aspects of emotional development and writing. The Foundation Stage manager, who is also one of the school's senior leaders, has identified these weaknesses correctly and parts of the curriculum in Year 1 have been adapted accordingly to help children make the transition to the National Curriculum more smoothly. All required welfare requirements are met. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour so that any inappropriate lack of attention is soon checked and behaviour is good. Sessions in phonics and a balanced focus on language skills and number work with the other areas of learning are keeping children happy and well motivated.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Eliminate remaining inconsistencies in the quality of provision, including teaching, in the main school and learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to raise standards even further.
- Make more use of the full range of techniques available to schools nationally to improve attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils at all stages, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, read well for their age. By the time they leave in Year 6, they achieve well in all subjects and standards are rising steadily. In 2005 and 2006, results in tests were below average. By 2008, this was no longer so, and in English, mathematics and science broadly average levels are evident. Senior staff and subject leaders respond effectively to pupils' performances, introducing successful strategies and interventions in teaching and learning to address fluctuations. Recently, for example, pupils' mathematical thinking has been the subject of intervention. Rigorous tracking of pupils' progress is leading to improvements through the school. National assessments in Year 2 are currently below average but appropriate steps are being taken to improve performance through, for example, help for younger pupils. Teaching is focusing effectively on writing skills, especially those of boys. In Year 1, increased opportunities for pupils to take more initiative in deciding what and how to learn is improving their confidence and concentration. Arrangements for pupils who struggle with learning are good. Knowledgeable teaching assistants support learning effectively, so pupils understand what to do to progress towards their targets.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They often exhibit genuine excitement and amazement at what they discover. Several Year 6 pupils expressed the highly ethical wish to give something back to the school community, because it had been so good to them. They commented, 'The staff have always worked very hard for us, so we want to volunteer as playground buddies and tutors to younger pupils, because it's only right that we want to give something back before we leave.' They make a good contribution to the global community through fund raising for a school in Africa. While most pupils' attendance is good, a few are

absent too often, reducing the overall picture to just satisfactory. This is a pity, as nearly all pupils say that they enjoy school immensely, as reflected overwhelmingly in parents' questionnaires. Behaviour is invariably outstanding. Those pupils who, for identified reasons, find it difficult to conform to the high standards expected are dealt with well, so disruption is minimised. Pupils understand the importance of healthy living and take full advantage of their opportunities in physical education, clubs and sporting events, knowing these are helping them to keep fit and active. The good progress that they make in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills is complemented by their willingness to cooperate in teams and groups and ensure they are prepared well for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, which contributes significantly to pupils' good achievement. In all cases, good relationships based on teachers' low key but very effective behaviour management skills and pupils' desire to do well are proving to be a winning combination, resulting in often excellent behaviour. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and interactive white boards are used well, contributing to this. In lessons that do not consistently achieve these heights, it is usually because teaching is not quite as lively as in the best lessons. Nevertheless, work is well matched to pupils' needs and teachers regularly refer to success criteria, ensuring that pupils know what they have to do to learn what is planned for them. In an outstanding lesson, the teacher was observed developing pupils' skills in exceptionally well-targeted tasks, using very clear questioning that responded totally and exactly to pupils' immediate learning needs.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum has been reviewed since the last inspection in order to implement revised schemes for literacy and numeracy, and ensure that pupils acquire new skills in a relevant order, without any unnecessary repetition of themes or subjects. Good adaptations are made to address the needs of pupils who find learning difficult. The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 now includes a wider range of activities that encourage pupils to become more actively involved in their learning. Drama, story telling and opportunities for pupils to talk to each other about how to learn are helping to raise achievement. Senior staff, with the support of subject leaders, have rightly identified the need to develop pupils' writing and mathematical skills. Lessons in subjects such as geography include good opportunities for pupils to write about issues such as traffic flow in their local town centre. Provision is enhanced with opportunities to learn Spanish, for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to play a musical instrument and for those with particular gifts and talents to take advantage of links with other schools.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is a particular strength. Staff know and respond to pupils' needs in a sensitive and caring manner. Pupils' individuality is recognised and celebrated. All statutory systems for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements and pupils say that they feel very safe in school. A lot of work has been put into improving attendance, although not all nationally available

strategies have been tried. Pupils feel valued and have a genuine voice in an active school council which has recently helped to install a new fitness trail. In this caring and nurturing environment, pupils far more often than not reach challenging targets set for them. Good links with outside support agencies, supplemented well by the school's own systems, mean that help is swiftly on hand for any pupils who experience difficulties with learning. Tight assessment procedures, which teachers work on in teams, are building expertise and provide accurate information about what to teach each pupil.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Senior leadership and staff at all levels share a common sense of purpose. They check how well the school is doing, observing the quality of each other's teaching and the closely related progress that pupils make. Their view of the school's performance and its priorities is accurate and they demonstrate a clear determination to move the school from good to outstanding. Challenging targets for improvement contribute to raising standards, while increasing the breadth of the curriculum and community involvement. Although a small number of parents in questionnaires felt that their views are neither sought nor welcomed, the overwhelming majority do not support this view. Many commented about the excellence of the headteacher and her leadership team. A typical response said, 'I think the school is very well led and managed. The headteacher is excellent'. Another said, 'My children love this school and I am proud that they come here'. The school makes a good contribution towards community cohesion through its effective links within the local community, by creating opportunities for pupils to appreciate the diversity of British culture and through global links.

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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?	2
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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
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**

13 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Belswains Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9QJ

Thank you for being so helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We did enjoy our time with you, looking at your work and visiting your lessons. We also enjoyed talking to you and especially the time that we spent with your school councillors, playground buddies and tutors. We agree with them that you all attend a good school, where the adults look after you well and make sure that you learn effectively. You particularly know a great deal about how to stay fit and to eat healthily. We were very impressed with your behaviour, and were very pleased to hear so many of you tell us that you enjoy school a lot. This makes it a bit surprising that attendance is not higher than it is.

Here are some more good things about your school.

- Teaching is good, so you make good progress in English, mathematics and science and many of you read very well for your age.
- Your teachers keep a close check on how you are getting on in your work, so they know exactly what to plan for you to do next.
- Your school councillors, buddies and tutors do a good job in helping the whole school to run smoothly.
- The senior staff and teachers at your school have good ideas for making it even better.

Here are two things that we have asked your governors, headteacher and staff to do to improve your school even more:

- make all your lessons as good as the best ones
- check whether there is anything else they can do to improve the attendance of those children who are away most often.

You can do your bit by continuing to behave as well as you do, by working hard in lessons and by trying never to be away unless, of course, you are too ill to get there.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully

John W. Paull

Lead Inspector