

Bishops Down Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118468
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326833
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	249
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	Nick Powell
Headteacher	Daniel Turvey
Date of previous school inspection	7 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Rydal Drive Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SU
Telephone number	01892 520114
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is of average size. The large majority of pupils are of White British background. Although the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently average, the number with a statement of special educational needs is very high because the school incorporates specialist provision for pupils with physical disabilities. These pupils are fully integrated into the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 6 classes. In this school, the Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Reception class and a Nursery which children attend part time. Bishops Down operates an extended school day through breakfast and after-school clubs. The headteacher was appointed 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: 2

This is a good school. Parents comment that, 'The children at Bishops Down are encouraged to be independent within a safe, caring and stimulating environment.' The pupils certainly enjoy thoroughly the excellent facilities and, particularly, the very well equipped playground and outdoor area. This even includes a wooden palisade fort at the top of a hillock. A feature that really stands out in this school is the way in which every child is fully included and involved. This means that pupils with complex learning needs and physical disabilities are able to join in with every activity and are fully integrated into school life. This is a point that is keenly valued by parents who comment, 'It is really good for the children to have classmates with special needs or disabilities as they learn so much from each other.' The outstanding care, guidance and support provided to pupils of all abilities contributes strongly to their outstanding personal development. Parents describe how much their children grow in confidence. As one explained, 'The school provides a culture that encourages learning, very good behaviour and respect for each other.'

Standards are above average, and this represents the good achievement throughout the school from the start of the Nursery to the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do as well as their peers because they benefit from support that is carefully tailored to their needs. However, even though around 40% of the pupils gain grammar school places, more able pupils do not all achieve quite as highly as they should because they are not always challenged enough in lessons. Nonetheless, teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. Lessons proceed at a lively pace, with activities that are varied to cater for the pupils' different learning styles. Increasingly, teachers make constructive links between different subjects to make the curriculum more exciting. For example, in Year 6, literacy was combined with information and communication technology (ICT) as pupils wrote tantalising introductions for the adventure games they were devising. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively, particularly in supporting those pupils who need extra help with their learning. The good relationships throughout the school mean that pupils are well motivated in lessons and generally eager to learn, but there is a small number in each class, more often boys, who are slower to volunteer answers to the teacher's questions and who can sometimes be quietly uninvolved.

In this well run school, each pupil's progress is carefully tracked, with support put in place for those identified as falling behind. The points for further development of teaching and learning have been correctly identified by school leaders in their own monitoring over the past year. This detailed and perceptive monitoring shows that self-evaluation is good, despite leaders' overly positive view of the school's overall effectiveness. It shows the school's good capacity for continued improvement. What is very evident is the shared commitment of the entire school community. A parent summed this up admirably in saying, 'The headteacher, staff, children and parents really care about their school, and this is reflected in the happy atmosphere.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children join the school with skills and capabilities in line with those expected for their ages. The very good start they get off to in the Nursery is continued during their time in the Reception class. As a parent rightly appreciated, 'The facilities are fantastic and the children have a wide and varied choice of play equipment and toys.' These are resources that every child, even those with severe disabilities, is able to enjoy to the full. All are fully included in the well planned

play opportunities in a safe, clean environment where they are helped to make good progress in their learning and development to attain above average standards by the start of Year 1. The children particularly enjoy the exciting play opportunities that they have across all areas of learning in the spacious, attractive outside area. The Early Years Foundation Stage is very well led and managed so that the very competent team of adults works very effectively as a team to give the children excellent support. Children are well known to the adults that work with them and their welfare and well-being are paramount. From this early age, they are encouraged to talk about how they feel and they begin to develop attitudes to learning that prepare them well for the next stage of their education. They become more independent, and are taught good hygiene routines and how to stay safe. The Nursery and the Reception staff are continually looking at what they do and strive for improvement. Children's progress is rigorously tracked by thorough, focused observations of their play. Leaders have recognised that children have not traditionally made such fast progress in their early writing skills as they have in their personal and social development. Steps have been introduced recently to remedy this, including through some stimulating activities, but it is too soon to gauge the extent to which these have had a sustained impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide opportunities for learning in all lessons that challenges and extends the most able pupils.
- Maintain the attention in lessons of all pupils by directing questions at those who are less keen to volunteer answers.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Although the number in each year group means that, understandably, there is some year-to-year fluctuation, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average and boys and girls achieve well throughout their time at Bishops Down. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly good progress. More able pupils do not all do quite as well as they should because they are not always challenged enough. Standards in writing have not always been as high as they should be. In the Year 2 assessments, standards in writing are much higher than they were reported to be in the last inspection. In Year 6 tests, writing standards have lagged behind those in other subjects because the school has traditionally focused mostly on boosting the performance in writing of those pupils who are on the borderline of attaining the nationally expected Level 4. This year it has extended this focus to those who could be pushed to attain the higher Level 5.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

'My children love their school. They wouldn't want to go anywhere else!' This comment from a parent was typical of the views of many. Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. Behaviour is exemplary and relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils feel they are consulted and they can make a contribution to how the school runs. They say their lessons are always fun, and they like the wide range of clubs on offer, and the many trips and other experiences provided for them. They develop a strong sense of responsibility, for example by serving one another in the breakfast club and by being monitors. They learn a great deal about healthy lifestyles and personal safety, and they feel exceptionally

safe at school because adults respect them and are always concerned for their welfare. A parent described being 'very pleased with the walking bus that my child has joined this year', explaining that it was 'great for road safety and awareness, and gives him a little more independence from us'. Pupils develop good skills for later life, for example through the strong emphasis in the curriculum on learning how to learn. Their spiritual, moral and social development is very good. They learn much about their own cultural heritage and about different faiths, but their broader experience of life in multicultural Britain is more limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are conducted at a lively pace so that, in the main, the pupils get a lot done. Teachers know their pupils well and plan varied activities which help to keep them on their toes. They succeed in making learning interesting and fun, which greatly contributes to pupils' enthusiasm for school. In lessons, the large majority of pupils learn well because they are eager to volunteer answers to the incisive questions that the teachers pose. There are sometimes small numbers of pupils, however, who, though well behaved, allow their attention to drift. Where this occurs, their progress slows. Teachers do not always quickly spot these incidences of inattention or respond to them by directing questions to these pupils to refocus their attention. Teachers make very effective use of their teaching assistants, especially in supporting the pupils with learning difficulties and those with physical disabilities. Although teachers' expectations are generally high, they often set the whole class essentially similar work to do. This can mean that work is not as challenging as it could be for the more able pupils. This is especially the case where the class are all given similar worksheets to complete, often limiting the opportunities for able pupils to practise and extend their writing skills by presenting information in their own words.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Although school leaders have ambitious plans to take this further, a strength of the curriculum is the way teachers link subjects together so that pupils can learn and apply their basic literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects. Year 5 pupils, for example, used drama and role play to combine work in literacy and history, preparing descriptive accounts of the Spanish Armada. Imaginative links such as these help to make learning relevant and fun. The impact on pupils' learning of some topic work is blunted, however, by an over-reliance in some classes on uninspiring worksheets. In the main, however, topics are planned so that pupils build on what they have learnt before, developing their learning and skills using stimulating, motivating activities, including visits to relevant places of interest. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were looking forward eagerly to an upcoming residential visit to the Isle of Wight, linked to their study of coasts. Exceptionally well planned support ensures that pupils with complex learning difficulties and physical disabilities are able to take full part in the curriculum and make good progress. Pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum is enhanced by a good selection of clubs, including many sports clubs. The curriculum is underpinned by the school's strong commitment to teaching its pupils how to think and learn, enabling them to take an active role in their own learning and personal development and preparing them well for the next stage of their education and later life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are rigorous procedures for safeguarding pupils within a secure and supportive environment that enables all pupils to make good progress, including those with complex learning needs. Pupils who are at risk of underachieving are identified promptly and given the extra support they need. The school makes excellent use of outside agencies to enhance the provision for its pupils and it works in close partnership with parents, who are very supportive of their children's education. Pupils have a generally good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. They all have individual targets, although these vary in quality and are not always reviewed and updated as frequently as they should be. Targets are very well supplemented, however, by teachers' marking which is increasingly helping to drive improvement by setting out clearly for pupils what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Often, teachers use their marking to enter into a dialogue with the pupils, posing them questions that, when they respond, make the pupils think more about their work. Pupils are involved in assessing for themselves how well they understand what they have been taught.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Even though the headteacher has only recently joined the school and, in the words of cautious parents, 'It is early days', many comment favourably on his approachability and the impact that he has already had on the school and its pupils. Along with the headteacher, school leaders have accurately identified the aspects of teaching to be strengthened in order to further accelerate pupils' learning. However, some of the points for development identified in monitoring some months ago remain still to be tackled. Nonetheless, leaders, staff and governors have a shared commitment to moving the school forward. They take a justifiable pride in the school's well earned reputation for equality of opportunity and inclusion, most notably in respect of pupils with disabilities. Community cohesion is promoted well through the opportunities that pupils have to learn about the wider world, not least by a trip to France that involved every child in the school. Pupils learn about different faiths but they otherwise have less experience of the diverse range of cultures in modern Britain. The school has drawn on its very strong partnership with parents and the local community to develop enviable facilities, especially for the playground and outdoor area, and the pupils certainly put these to very good use. Governors know the school well and hold the school to account, although they tend to overemphasise the impact on overall achievement of the percentage of pupils with special educational needs. This means that they do not set their expectations of performance quite as high as they should.

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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?	1

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	2
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	2
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

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?	2
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	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	1
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**

6 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishops Down Primary School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SU

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed our time at your school, and we could see that you greatly enjoy your time there too. Bishops Down is a good school where you make good progress from the start of the Nursery to the end of Year 6 and reach standards that are generally above average. This is because you benefit from good teaching and a curriculum that is made interesting and exciting, particularly in the way it links different subjects together. I enjoyed reading some of the introductions Year 6 were writing for the adventure games they were preparing using their literacy and ICT skills. I hope the finished products eventually go up on the school website so I have a chance to see them.

One of the things that really stands out in your well run school is the way everyone has the chance to join in with all that goes on. Those of you who need extra help with your learning because of your individual needs especially benefit from this, but everyone in the school benefits from the excellent care and support that staff provide. We were impressed with how very well you all get on together and with how very well behaved you all are. We noticed, though, that sometimes in lessons, one or two of you allow your attention to drift. We have asked teachers to look out for this and to fire individual questions at those of you who are slower to put up your hands to answer. That way, staff can be sure that you are all kept on your toes and learning as much as you can. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that they arrange activities that stretch those of you who find the work too easy. We were pleased to see the helpful feedback that teachers give you on your work through their marking. You can help to do even better by always making sure that you read their comments and do your very best to follow their advice.

Thank you again for being so helpful to us on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector