

Buckfastleigh Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113192
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	330296
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	David Townsend HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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)	169
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	Geoff Woods
Headteacher	Nick Banwell
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bossell Road Buckfastleigh TQ11 0DD
Telephone number	01364 643304
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

When the school was inspected in November 2006 it was judged to require special measures. Since that time, there have been a number of changes to the teaching staff and a new headteacher took up post in April 2008. In this smaller than average school the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average overall but well above average in the older classes, including some who have joined the school in recent terms. The school provides support for a number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) at the start of the Reception Year. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is generally below that seen nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. It provides a satisfactory standard of education for pupils. Better teaching is enabling pupils of all abilities to develop positive attitudes to learning. This and the closer checks on their achievement mean pupils are making satisfactory progress.

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are rising, they are average in the younger classes but below average in Years 3 to 6, in part due to the legacy of the school's past difficulties but also because a significant number of pupils have learning difficulties in the older classes. There is no longer the underachievement apparent at the time of the last inspection and many are making accelerated progress this year. Extra support teaching and a concerted drive to improve provision for boys have led to improved standards in writing across the school. More pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are on course to meet challenging targets in English, mathematics and science.

Improved achievement is the result of better leadership and management, the quality of which is now satisfactory. The headteacher has raised morale and improved procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning. However, the systems do not promote consistently good progress for pupils. Whilst the school has eradicated inadequate practice and improved its quality, teaching and learning are satisfactory with emerging strengths rather than consistently good. Subject leaders know pupils' learning needs well but are less involved in evaluating and developing teaching. Academic guidance is satisfactory but underdeveloped. Challenging predictions as to what pupils will achieve have been set but the school does not translate these into curricular targets that teachers use and pupils understand. The curriculum is improved and satisfactory, with good extra-curricular activities on offer. It is suitably broad and matched to pupils' needs, but opportunities are missed for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to their learning in other subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good, underpinned by the effective levels of pastoral care. Pupils rightly report that behaviour is improved and is good. Pupils are polite, considerate and enthusiastic. They enjoy school and feel safe. Systems for ensuring their welfare, including those for child protection and safeguarding, are robust. Although most pupils attend regularly and punctually, attendance is in line with the national average and the school is working hard to support all families in promoting good attendance.

Although there is more to do, actions taken to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' attitudes and behaviour and leadership at all levels have enabled the school to successfully combat underachievement. The headteacher has raised expectations, and accurate monitoring, evaluation and improvement planning are helping to raise standards and achievement. These improvements since the last inspection mean that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children's skills when children enter the school are below those typically expected, particularly their communication, language and number calculation skills. Skilful teaching and stimulating learning opportunities ensure that they make good progress in all areas of learning. There is a good balance of indoor and outdoor learning, including both child and adult led activities. By

the end of the Reception Year most children have the their knowledge, skills and understanding expected for their ages, including reading, writing and counting. They enjoy stories and recall events from them well. They are learning to record their findings, such as when pairing animals to go into the ark or writing labels for parcels they have wrapped. Well-planned activities help pupils improve their calculation skills. Children's personal and social skills develop well because there is a very good focus on encouraging children to become independent learners. The adults encourage them to make choices, organise themselves and work cooperatively in pairs and in groups. They do this well. The welfare of children in the EYFS is a high priority for all staff and the level of care for children is good. Although the systems used to assess and record the progress children make are effective, they are inconsistently used. The analysis and evaluation of children's progress towards targets are at an early stage. The EYFS leader uses her specialist knowledge and enthusiasm well to make learning stimulating and purposeful. Systems for liaising with parents are well organised and effective?. The leader has made notable improvements to provision and the learning environment within the EYFS base.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, especially in writing, by ensuring teaching is consistently good.
- Improve processes for setting learning targets with children in the EYFS and all pupils and for evaluating their progress towards them.
- Develop the role of middle leaders in evaluating and developing classroom practice.
- Increase the opportunities pupils get to apply their literacy and numeracy skills to learning across the curriculum. 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

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards, although below average in Years 3 to 6, are rising and progress rates are at least satisfactory. More pupils are making rapid gains in their learning this year and are on course to meet challenging targets. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average overall and above average in mathematics, especially at the higher Level 3. Although reading standards are in line with those expected for their age, writing is below average. This year, teachers are giving close attention to pupils' phonic skills for reading and spelling and these are improving. In Years 3 and 4, more pupils are making accelerated progress this year and catching up on lost ground. Progress is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. In these classes, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average and a number of pupils requiring additional support have joined the school in recent terms. In last year's national tests, standards were broadly average in mathematics and science but below average in English. Below average writing standards across the school have given cause for concern. This year, regular progress checks, accurate assessments, stronger teaching and focused intervention work with those at risk of underachieving mean pupils in all year groups are making better progress in writing. Boys are more engaged in the writing process because the purposes for writing, such as preparing arguments for a debate about animal conservation, motivate them to write at length. Pupils with learning difficulties, including those with moderate learning and behavioural needs, make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour in class, around the school and in the playground is good. It has improved since the last inspection. Pupils report that they feel safe and that bullying is rare. Pupils act sensibly, are safety conscious and know to whom to turn with any problems. They particularly enjoy school, believing the work set for them to be challenging and the teachers' marking helpful. They are well aware of the need to keep fit and healthy and they act on the advice they receive. The pupils with whom we talked are quite disapproving of unhealthy snacks! Although most attend school regularly and punctually, a small number of pupils do not and the school is working hard to address this. The spiritual, moral and social development of pupils is good. There is a positive ethos within the school and pupils are considerate and reflective young people. They are appropriately prepared for the next stage in their education and recognise the importance of acquiring a good level of basic skills. They are involved in both community life within school and the locality, for example in many fundraising initiatives. Plans are in place to develop these links further, especially as the school recognises that pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures is less secure.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, such that all pupils make sufficient progress and sometimes more accelerated gains in their learning. Teachers use their knowledge of the class to ensure activities are interesting and often match tasks to pupils' abilities. This has helped increase pupils' level of engagement in their own learning, especially that of boys in the older classes. Pupils are taking more responsibility for their own work. Where teaching is less effective, pupils within groups do not receive enough focused teaching at their own level. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to improve pupils' weaker spelling skills by recording key words and the exciting vocabulary generated in discussions. Teachers' marking is very detailed and provides pupils with clear ideas as to how they can improve, although they do not link this guidance to pupils' targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and appropriately matched to the interests and capabilities of all pupils. A good range of visits and specialist tuition enrich the curriculum, especially in music and sport. Pupils benefit from a wide range of after school clubs and activities for which take up rates are good. Close links with South Dartmoor Community College enable pupils to attend additional subject workshops and help to ease transition for pupils entering Year 7. There is an appropriate focus on enabling pupils gain confidence in using information and communication technology (ICT). The additional teaching for pupils requiring extra help in their acquisition of basic skills supports progress well. A review of the curriculum has already identified that planning for pupils to apply literacy and numeracy skills to their learning in other subjects is underdeveloped.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care and arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare are good. The school has robust procedures for child protection, health and safety and safeguarding. Staff know pupils well and work well with a range of outside specialists to ensure support for vulnerable pupils is good, including those with learning difficulties. The teaching team pays close attention to their individual needs and is now measuring the smaller steps it needs to take in their learning more precisely. Pupils value the school's systems for managing behaviour. The school takes prompt action to address issues relating to attendance and punctuality. It uses close links with the local authority well to support families in this regard. However, the quality of academic guidance offered to pupils is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils value the advice teachers give when marking individual pieces of work, but whole class targets are not supporting their learning successfully enough. Teachers do not refer to them sufficiently and pupils are not sure of their own targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides good leadership and has united staff in his drive to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Together with governors, he has increased staffing stability and raised morale. He has used his own analysis of standards and lesson observations to determine an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Well targeted support and good monitoring have improved behaviour and attitudes. The aims set in relation to raising standards are more realistic and challenging because teachers have higher expectations and are increasingly making accurate assessments to inform the process. However, systems for translating these predictions into meaningful curricular targets for pupils and evaluating pupils' progress towards them are underdeveloped. There has been a good focus on modelling the features of effective lessons and this has helped raise the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders have a clearer understanding of what pupils need to improve in their learning and are working more independently to support colleagues in their roles this term. However, they are not sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching in their subjects.

Governors provide satisfactory support to the school's leadership. They know the school well and have played a full role in establishing its purposeful sense of direction. Together with senior leaders, they have worked hard to help combat underachievement by removing barriers to learning that exist for some pupils. Links with parents, local groups and other schools are developing. The school therefore makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion.

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	3

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?	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Buckfastleigh Primary School, Buckfastleigh TQ11 0DD

Thank you for your welcome and the help that you gave us during the recent inspection of your school. I am pleased to tell you that the school has improved since the last inspection and no longer requires extra help to improve. These are the things we particularly liked about your school.

- You make at least satisfactory progress with your work and some of you are taking faster leaps in your learning this year. This is because teaching has improved and, in turn, you are showing positive attitudes to your work.
- The grown ups in the school know you very well and look after you well.
- You behave well, think about others and enjoy school. We know you particularly like the chances you get to play sport, learn instruments and go on interesting trips.
- Your headteacher knows each one of you and leads the school well, with help from all the other adults who work hard on your behalf.

These are the things we have asked the school to improve.

- Teaching and learning have improved but we would like to see it being even better in all your lessons so that you all make faster progress and test results keep improving.
- We have asked the adults to make sure you understand your targets and know how to improve your work in each lesson.
- Teachers with particular expertise in each subject need more time to visit your classrooms and help each other to develop new ideas.
- We think you need more chances to use your improving skills in reading, writing and numeracy in your learning in other subjects.

We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Townsend

Her Majesty's Inspector