

Biscovey Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111981
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337799
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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 of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Williams
Headteacher	Roger Green
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 learning sessions, including an assembly and a performance by the boys' choir. Inspectors also visited morning play and lunchtime activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils, an educational psychologist and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including school plans and policies, assessments and the tracking of children's progress, and the provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In addition, 78 parental questionnaires, 97 pupils' questionnaires and 24 staff questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress that pupils make in their learning, particularly in reading and whether this is equally as good for all groups of pupils
- how well assessment is used to improve teaching and learning
- the degree to which leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, monitor and evaluate provision to bring about continuous improvement.

Information about the school

This junior school is above average in size. It hosts a designated unit for pupils with a hearing impairment and, as a result, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The percentage of pupils receiving free school meals is also above average. A local authority 'Early Intervention Centre' for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also located on the school site. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and a few pupils speak English as an additional language.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Biscovey Junior is a good school. It is a welcoming, inclusive school that continues to improve. The headteacher gives an exemplary lead and has established a strongly shared vision for continued improvement. He is very well supported by staff and governors in providing excellent care, guidance and support and good quality teaching and learning for the pupils. As a result, pupils achieve well academically and their personal development is exceptionally good. From varying starting points, standards match the national average and reflect the pupils' good progress.

The pupils' excellent behaviour, their good attendance and their warm relationships with each other and with adults reflect the staff's outstanding pastoral care and the way they fully safeguard the pupils' welfare. The pupils' very willing contributions in class and during club activities along with their excellent adoption of safe, healthy living also mirror the role models set by staff. There is a close partnership with parents, although some parents of younger pupils could do more to support their child's reading at home. Pupils happily share ideas as 'talking partners' and contribute well to class discussions, and the way, for example, older pupils support younger pupils with reading reflects the pupils' willing contributions to the school's inclusive community. Many parents, pupils and staff express their appreciation of these attributes, a typical comment being, 'The school has a progressive attitude and from personal observation the children respect their teachers and are aware of how proud the teachers are of them.'

Well-considered self-evaluation and agreed whole school approaches, particularly in enhancing the pupils' speaking and writing and in setting challenging targets, have brought good improvements since the last inspection. The school is well placed to continue and sustain this improvement into the future. In recent years the teachers have also strengthened the way they engage with pupils. In particular, the more consistent implementation of a good range of practical curricular learning activities, including, for example, drama, sports, choral singing and frequent off-site visits, has lifted pupils' enjoyment and encouraged more effort in learning. Consequently, progress has been lifted from satisfactory to good and the drive to raise standards further continues steadily. This is seen, for example, in the increasing number of pupils developing good skills in speaking, undertaking research and in using computers. The school readily accepts that, while successful, the concerted effort to improve pupils' writing has limited the time available for pupils to read. As a result, pupils' progress in reading has not matched that made in other aspects of English. The school is now addressing this, but reinvigorated strategies such as reading in groups, have not yet had time to accelerate reading as much as intended.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To further the development of the school, the headteacher, staff and governors should continue the drive to raise standards, more particularly at this time in reading, by:
- providing more opportunities for the pupils to read as individuals and in groups
- making even better use of the school's strong partnership with parents to support reading at home, especially for younger pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Inspectors' observations in lessons clearly showed that the pupils' increased interest and engagement in their work has strengthened their learning. Teachers are mindful of these issues and in English lessons, for example, are careful to draw out pupils' ideas through questioning or by asking them to share observations with each other. A good example of this was seen in an art lesson when pupils compared photographs with impressionist paintings. Pupils enjoy this way of learning, additionally because their ideas are valued and because discussions flow from practical work, which often includes drama or using computers.

The school continues to include all pupils equally and has been successful in establishing good progress and achievement for all pupils, including those for whom English is an additional language. In previous years, pupils have generally been admitted with below average skills. This year, the school's assessments on entry show a more-able group with broadly average skills. By the time they leave the school, pupils, across the range of abilities and including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have achieved well in English, mathematics and science and developed average levels of attainment. The pupils' good progress in writing, including by boys, represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. This stems from the work of leaders and managers in emphasising writing and in strengthening teaching, learning and assessment across the school. However, improvement in pupils' reading skills has not kept up with the acceleration evident in their speaking, writing and mathematical development.

Pupils are polite and very well mannered and their behaviour is excellent. They say that they feel very safe and really enjoy their time at the school, especially when they can work practically as in science, art, sports or singing. These positive feelings promote their good attendance. Their wholehearted and regular participation in school clubs, for example, also shows their excellent adoption of healthy lifestyles. The pupils' contribution to the life of the school is excellent, for instance, by taking responsibility for playground sports equipment or helping younger pupils with their reading. Pupils make their views known in class discussions and through the school council and readily appreciate the way staff value and act upon their ideas. They make good progress in developing their self-confidence and independent learning skills as they move through the school. These are evident as they investigate in science, solve problems in

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mathematics and use computers, for example, to make power point presentations of their topic work. Even though their reading skills are not always developed to the full, their generally good academic achievement and, in particular, their knowledge of how to learn effectively and how to live happily and safely as a member of a community, prepare them well for the next stage of their learning.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Effective monitoring has helped to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning has been improved well since the last inspection. Most teaching is now at least good, includes a productive emphasis on practical activity and promotes the interest of pupils. Whilst there are occasional variations, teaching is never less than satisfactory. At times, outstanding features such as the teachers' sharp questioning, high expectations and stimulating use of interactive whiteboards and educational visits are highly effective in motivating the pupils and strengthening their learning. Staff have improved the way they assess the pupils' work and progress. They now use this information effectively to secure sustained progression in pupils' learning and to ensure that all groups of learners

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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are doing equally well. As a consequence, teachers have strengthened their planning and base learning on interesting topics, accelerating, in particular, the development of pupils' writing. A recent ride on a steam train, for example, enthused Year 4 pupils and engaged them successfully in their learning. Staff, including capable teaching assistants, are skilled in adjusting the way they engage with the pupils and match the work and challenge to meet their differing needs. Learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example, are fully included in lessons and benefit from individual or small group support. Very occasionally, though, when pupils have to sit and listen for too long, they lose interest and consequently, their learning slows.

The school's good curriculum is underpinned by the way subjects are linked together. Examples of this were seen when inspectors observed literacy and art, taught through using local studies, and literacy, numeracy and healthy eating taught by writing instructions on how to make a 'ham-tikka sandwich'. On other occasions inspectors observed music and choral singing being used to promote the pupils' cultural understanding. The curriculum is further enriched by an excellent range of clubs and visits, to the seaside or the 'Eden Project', for example. In recent years, the school's very effective emphasis on improving the pupils' writing skills has restricted pupils' reading opportunities. The parents' support of their children's reading at home generally improves as their partnership with the school develops, but it is variable at times. Steps are now being taken to provide more time for reading at school and at home, but these have not yet been in place long enough to improve pupils' skills to the full.

All staff are diligent in providing the very best quality of pastoral care and support. Each pupil is treated as a unique individual and rigorous safeguarding procedures ensure the welfare of all pupils. Staff give good academic guidance and, as a result, pupils know what they have to do to improve and make good progress in developing independence in learning as they move through the school. The pupils' improved attendance reflects the parents' positive response to the school's very supportive efforts to reduce persistent absence. The school's 'Link into Learning' family learning project is also helping to engage more parents in their children's learning. As one parent said, 'I value the opportunity to work in quiet surroundings with a teacher on hand to support.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and sustains an unwavering drive for

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improvement. Senior colleagues and governors strongly share this unity of purpose, which has secured good improvement since the last inspection. The pupils' good achievement and their excellent enjoyment and personal qualities clearly show that the school provides good value for money. The high quality work of governors is particularly evident in their support of staff, encouraging professional development, meeting statutory obligations and in collaborating with staff to fully safeguard the pupils' well-being. Staff morale is very high and all staff are diligent in ensuring that pupils enjoy equal opportunity. They work effectively with parents, outside agencies and the local community to enhance pupils' learning. Within these partnerships, staff work diligently to ensure high-quality care and support of pupils with complex needs and that pupils benefit from an excellent range of clubs and visits. Activities such as participating in local choral events, the teaching of French and contributions to national and international charities also promote community cohesion effectively. Since the last inspection, senior staff have strengthened the way they evaluate the effectiveness of the school. Self-evaluation is now good, particularly in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning and children's progress. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has been improved, not least because of strengthened procedures for assessing pupils' progress and identifying relevant learning targets. A good momentum of improvement continues. However, leaders and managers rightly identify the need to raise standards further and that, following a successful focus on lifting standards in writing, current actions to similarly accelerate pupils' progress in reading remain 'work in progress'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

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The vast majority of the parents are entirely happy and have full confidence in the work of the school. There was unanimous agreement in the parents' responses to the questionnaire that the school keeps children safe and promotes healthy lifestyles. There was also almost full agreement that children make good progress, are well prepared for the future and have their needs met. Almost all parents also acknowledge effective leadership. Several parents either spoke with an inspector or wrote at length to also confirm the very positive responses in the questionnaires. There were a few parental criticisms, including concerns about pupils' behaviour and the support for pupils with special needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors were mindful of these parental concerns and examined them during the inspection, but concluded from their observations that the behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is excellent and that the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Biscovey Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	56	31	40	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	49	39	51	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	33	43	37	48	4	5	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	53	29	38	1	1	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	51	35	45	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	44	35	45	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	43	42	55	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	52	33	43	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	42	40	52	1	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	36	38	49	8	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	31	46	60	3	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	47	37	48	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	56	32	42	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Biscovey Junior School, Par, PL24 2DB

Thank you for the warmth and politeness that you showed towards us throughout the inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting and talking with many of you. I would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us, in particular members of the school council. We agree with you and your parents that Biscovey Junior is a good school that continues to improve.

We were impressed by many things, but especially by your excellent behaviour, the way you so willingly contribute to the day-to-day life of the school and by the diligence of staff in keeping you safe. I would also like to thank those members of the boys' choir who sang so beautifully for me. I have to say that I was very moved by the passion and harmony of their singing. These are some of the other main things we found:

- The levels of attainment that you reach in Year 6, including in writing, match the national average. These show that you are taught well and make good progress. An increasing number of you reach above average levels and show good skills in speaking and listening, using computers and in sports and music.
- You are really happy at school, feel very safe and live healthily because you enjoy a good curriculum and participate very fully in an outstanding range of clubs and visits.
- Your headteacher is a very talented leader who inspires and works very closely with staff and governors. Together, they lead and manage the school well, are very supportive of your parents and make sure that you are cared for in an exemplary manner.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to:

- continue to raise standards, especially in reading, by giving you more opportunities to read while at school and by encouraging more of your parents to assist in helping you to read regularly at home.

You can help by continuing to work hard and, in particular, by reading, enjoying and learning from books as often as you can.

Thank you again and best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Alex Baxter

Lead inspector

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