

The Buttsbury Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115278
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338552
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	483
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Stuart
Headteacher	Vaughan Collier
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2006
School address	Norsey View Drive Billericay CM12 0QR
Telephone number	01277 623217
Fax number	01277 631141
Email address	admin@buttsbury-jun.essex.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around half the time that pupils were in lessons observing learning. Inspectors visited 24 lessons and observed 20 teachers and higher level teaching assistants leading learning. They held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They looked at samples of pupils' work, analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring, the school development plan, risk assessments, the minutes of governors' meetings and the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 154 parents and carers.

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

- the impact of actions taken by school leaders and staff to raise attainment in writing, particularly among more able pupils
- how school leaders have used partnership arrangements with parents and other schools to extend the range of pupils' experiences and their achievements.

Information about the school

In this large school, almost all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Buttsbury Junior has achieved a number of awards, including Active Mark, an Intermediate International award from the British Council, and Football Association Charter Mark status. Buttsbury Junior is part of a local schools' consortium which recently became the Billericay Community Trust and through which it offers a range of extended services to pupils and their families. These include independently run before- and after-school care which is inspected separately.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Buttsbury Junior School community work together to enable every learner to progress and achieve highly in a safe, happy, caring, stimulating and challenging environment, in order to become confident, safe and healthy individuals who make a positive contribution to society.' This statement of the school vision set out by the headteacher, leaders and governors aptly sums up this outstanding school. Pupils describe their school in an equally apt motto, which they devised when working with younger pupils in the infant school, from which almost all transfer: 'Be Safe, Be Smart, Be Happy, Be Buttsbury!' They call this 'The Buttsbury Way'.

Pupils' achievement is outstanding because attainment is high and pupils are enthusiastic learners. Their current work is of a high standard, and results in the Year 6 national tests have been significantly above average in each of the years since the last inspection. Pupils now make much faster progress in mathematics than was seen in the last inspection. Although it was still significantly above average, pupils' attainment in writing declined in recent years but it is improving now. This is because school leaders correctly identified the need to increase pupils' comprehension and creativity to the level of their spelling and punctuation, and they have put in place measures to encourage more expressive writing. This is evident throughout the school and across a range of different subjects. Year 3 pupils studying the Roman invasion of Britain have drawn on what they had learnt in order to write thoughtful 'diary' entries from the perspective of Julius Caesar, and pupils in Year 5 have written descriptive accounts of their 'very special secret gardens' to accompany their Monet-inspired artwork.

Not only do pupils do very well in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science; they also produce work of a high standard in art, and the school has an impressive record of sporting success. Music too has prominence in the school's stimulating curriculum. The breadth of activities on offer results in part from Buttsbury Junior's extremely productive partnership arrangements with other schools and with the local community. Pupils are especially keen on the very wide range of clubs on offer: there are more than 50 in all, including several run by parents. The curriculum contributes greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their strong motivation in lessons. Pupils also try hard because they like and get on well with their teachers. Teachers' expectations are usually high, demanding the best from pupils in terms of effort, attainment and behaviour. As a result, behaviour is excellent and pupils work with sustained concentration. Sometimes, however, the pace of learning is slowed when lesson introductions are over-long or when much time is taken by pupils copying out learning intentions and the intended success criteria. Progress is also slower than it could be in those lessons where tasks are not tailored sufficiently to different pupils'

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learning needs.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need for exercise and a healthy diet. A great many take part in active sports, even if not all make the healthiest choices in the temptation of the lunch queue. Pupils feel extremely safe at school because they are very well looked after. Parents especially appreciate the way in which their children are helped to move up from the infants, and a parent of a child who transferred to Buttsbury Junior partway through Key Stage 2 praised the way her daughter had been helped to settle in because 'her classmates are amazingly caring and friendly'. There is appreciation too for the extended services that Buttsbury Junior has been able to offer in conjunction with other local schools through the Billericay Community Trust, in which the school and governors have taken a lead. Systems to promote attendance have proven very successful; attendance rates are well above average and there have been pupils who have won prizes for achieving 100% attendance in all four of their years at the school. Pupils take a justified pride in the many responsibilities they take on within the school community, and they show an alert interest in different beliefs, cultures and ways of life in the United Kingdom and around the world. These include well-developed links with a school in Kenya, for which the school has won an international award.

In continually analysing pupils' performance, in celebrating pupils' academic and personal successes, and in pressing for constantly improved provision and outcomes, the headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors demonstrate a shared vision for the school's and its pupils' achievement. They can point to many successes in maintaining and building on high standards, but they have a realistic picture of Buttsbury Junior's strengths and of where there is room for further development. They have, for example, identified but have not fully addressed variations in the quality of teaching and learning between some classes. Nevertheless, the school's continued success shows its good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maximise the progress that pupils make in lessons by the start of the autumn term 2010 by:
 - consistently matching work to pupils' different capabilities, including within the ability sets in English and mathematics
 - ensuring that teaching time is used to best effect so that pupils are not spending too long copying instructions or listening passively at the start of lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils greatly enjoy school and they make good progress in lessons. They build on their above-average starting points when they join Year 3, and their attainment by the end of Year 6 is significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. This is evident not just from the Year 6 national test scores of previous years but is confirmed

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in the high quality of pupils' current work. There was a dip in test results in writing in 2009, when fewer pupils attained Level 5 than were expected to by their teachers. Although the standard of pupils' spelling and punctuation was high, pupils were not all writing with a similarly high degree of creativity and expression. Prompt action this year is already showing its impact in the quality of pupils' work. In every class, 'word walls' place an emphasis on, for example, imaginative adjectives, and pupils' writing shows that they readily take on board the encouragement to extend their vocabulary. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are helped to make similar progress to their peers.

Attainment is high in other subjects too, most notably in art, music and physical education. For instance, the various renditions by Year 6 pupils inspired by Picasso's Weeping Woman show artwork not merely of an exceptional standard but also a remarkably mature and thoughtful understanding of the artist's work. Pupils display a genuine interest in the lives of others. They help each other, including as 'playground playleaders' and 'learning buddies', and they develop a sense of responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves. As pupils themselves explained, 'We are lucky with what we have' and, 'Lots of children are much poorer and need our help.'

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	2
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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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How effective is the provision?

Pupils routinely start most days with some physical activity within the classroom. Teachers creatively squeeze more into the curriculum by sometimes combining this with other subjects. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils practised their Tai Chi exercises by following instructions given to them in French. Buttsbury Junior has made exceptionally good use of its partnership arrangements with other local schools. These have enabled provision for pupils to be extended beyond the ordinary school day and over holiday periods. They also contribute to the high standard of care, enabling the school to offer extra support for pupils and families where this is needed, for example through the 'Pyramid Club' aimed at helping pupils who need a boost to their confidence or who may be at risk of falling behind. Partnership arrangements have also contributed to the very rich curriculum, giving access, for example, to specialist sports coaches. Opportunities to write creatively in subjects across the curriculum have helped to strengthen pupils' writing skills. These also extend beyond the school day to, for example, The Buttsbury Bulletin, where a team of budding journalists within the school produce what is described in the masthead as 'the school newspaper, written for the pupils, by the pupils'.

Teaching seen in the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. It was good overall, matching the picture of pupils' progress. Teachers manage their classes well, and pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers set out clear learning intentions at the start of each lesson, explaining success criteria to the pupils so that they can gauge for themselves how well they are doing. Teachers do not always capitalise fully on pupils' enthusiasm for learning, however. On occasion, progress slows because too long is spent copying out lengthy success criteria and listening passively to long introductions. At the end of lessons, teachers sometimes tell the pupils what they have learnt rather than taking the opportunity to ask the pupils to explain that for themselves. Nonetheless, pupils are widely involved in assessing their own and each other's work. They know their individual targets, and these, and the guidance from teachers' marking, help them to move their learning on. Lessons are generally well planned. In the most effective lessons, teachers draw well on their analysis of any misunderstandings from previous work to focus pupils' learning. Sometimes, however, work is not closely enough matched to pupils' different abilities. Although pupils are divided into ability sets throughout the school for mathematics and for English in Years 5 and 6, there is still a wide range of ability within each set. When all have the same activity to complete, it can prove to be insufficiently challenging for the more able or too taxing for lower attaining pupils and some of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, even working with adult 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

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Despite the school's solid track record of success, there is no hint of complacency from the headteacher, school leaders or governors, all of whom are involved constantly in evaluating how to drive the school further forward. Careful monitoring of lessons has given leaders an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and of where improvements would accelerate learning. Detailed feedback is given to staff but this is not always rigorously followed up to ensure that the points for improvement are fully addressed.

Measures to ensure pupils' safeguarding meet the latest legal requirements. There is an appropriately detailed single record confirming that all adults working with children have been vetted. All required policies and procedures are in place, although the child protection policy has not recently been reviewed and updated. Equality is promoted well, so that the school runs as a very happy, harmonious community. Boys and girls achieve equally highly, even though there is scope for better matching work to pupils' different capabilities. Another outstanding feature of the school is the impact of the energy put into promoting community cohesion. Pupils have been very successfully encouraged to look beyond their everyday experiences to take a keen interest in other beliefs and ways of life. A Ghanaian teacher, for example, spends a week each year at the school to help broaden the pupils' horizons. The school plays an active part in the local and wider community, not least through pupils' support for a wide range of local, national and international charities.

Parents recognise their role as partners in their children's learning. Even among those who voice some criticisms about some aspects of the school, there is appreciation for what they describe as 'significant improvement in school-home communication since September'. Parents are pleased at the use by the school of email, texting and the website. Parents also praise the way that year group newsletters provide them with 'information about curriculum themes and activities' that help them to support their children's learning.

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

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents express positive views of the school. Parents especially praise the range of extra-curricular provision on offer and the arrangements for pupils' safety and well-being. Some parents voiced reservations about the amount of homework. Inspectors found that homework is used well to reinforce classroom learning. The school arranges a club to provide facilities for those who have difficulty completing homework at home. A significant minority of parents wrote to pass on their concerns about the quality of school lunches. As one explained, 'The school encourages healthy snacks at break time but falls down at lunchtimes by offering chips with jacket potatoes instead of encouraging a healthy choice.' Inspectors looked at this and confirmed that these less healthy combinations could sometimes occur. They found that the headteacher and governors had already set out, with the full involvement of pupils, to review school lunch provision and to encourage more healthy options. Some parents describe the school buildings as 'shabby'. Although the vibrant displays of pupils' work help to create a stimulating learning environment, inspectors agree that some of the decor looks tired. There is no disagreement either from the headteacher and governors. Their school development plan recognises this and includes a schedule for planned further refurbishment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Buttsbury 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 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 154 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 483 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	38	87	56	7	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	40	91	59	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	30	20	109	71	14	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	16	109	71	18	12	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	41	27	101	66	9	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	13	110	73	18	12	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	18	100	66	20	13	4	3
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)	35	24	102	70	5	3	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	16	107	70	18	12	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	21	96	66	16	11	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	13	109	76	14	10	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	27	18	104	70	14	9	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	28	96	63	9	6	4	3

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



8 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Buttsbury Junior School, Billericay, CM12 0QR

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit. You told us how proud you are of your school. You have every right to be: Buttsbury Junior is an excellent school where you make good progress to achieve high standards. You do well in the Year 6 tests in English, mathematics and science, but you do just as well in other subjects too. We were especially impressed with the high standard of artwork around the school. It is the wide range of exciting things that you get to do at Buttsbury Junior that really stands out about the school.

We were very pleased to see such exemplary behaviour in lessons and in the playground. You all get on very well together and look out for each other. This helps to make the school such a happy, safe place to be - so that you live up to the Buttsbury Way motto. You take an exceptionally keen interest in the lives of others around the world. You know all about the need for exercise and a healthy diet, but not all of you practise what you preach; you do not all choose the healthiest options at lunchtime!

Staff look after you very well and you make good progress in lessons because the teaching is good. You know your targets and your teachers' marking gives you clear guidance on how to make your work even better. You can also help to improve further by always being sure to read your teachers' comments and follow their advice. You are enthusiastic in lessons but sometimes you have to wait too long before you get started on activities. We have asked teachers to look at this, and to make sure too that the time spent writing out success criteria does not eat too much into the time available for other tasks. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you are not given work that is too easy or too hard for you.

Thank you again for being so polite and friendly when we came to call. Our very best wishes for your continued success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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