

Beechwood Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116087
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	338720
Inspection dates	30 November –1 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen Lake

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	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angela Oliver
Headteacher	Susan Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	2 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the most recent school self-evaluation form, the school development plan and governors' minutes. They also examined the school's assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, the records held on vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs, school policies, and reports from the local authority and School Improvement Partner. Inspectors analysed questionnaires from pupils, staff and 32 parents.

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

- how well the revised curriculum and systems for assessment are being used to provide greater challenge for more able pupils, and improve boys' achievement in reading and writing
- how effectively pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported and challenged to achieve of their best
- the impact of the changes to a more distributed form of leadership upon standards, especially in English, and upon the capacity to improve.

Information about the school

Beechwood Junior School is smaller than average. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds but around 10% come from other ethnic groups. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above average. The school takes in a small number of pupils who have found it difficult to settle to their education in other schools. The school has gained the Activemark and the Healthy Schools award.

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

Beechwood Community Junior School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. It is improving rapidly because of a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching. The school has many strengths.

The school provides a secure, caring environment in which pupils, including those who have experienced previous disruption in their schooling, settle in quickly and feel safe. This is helping all pupils to become more confident and effective learners. Pupils were very keen to tell inspectors how much they like the school and how it helps them understand how to keep fit and healthy. They feel safe and know how to stay safe because of the good guidance they receive. The procedures for safeguarding and child protection are excellent. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a good understanding of their local community but their knowledge and understanding of wider British culture are relatively limited.

Standards are rising steadily and consistently, and are now above average by Year 6. Pupils' achievement is good, as a result of good quality teaching. Teachers are making better use of the revised systems for assessment to plan work that challenges pupils more rigorously. This is accelerating the progress that pupils, especially boys, are making, particularly in English, although progress in writing is not as good as in reading. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are supported well in lessons by skilled teaching assistants. Nevertheless, the smaller group of those with more complex special educational needs who require a lot of support do not make as much progress as other pupils because the targets set for them in their individual education plans are neither precise enough nor linked to a suitable short timescale.

The sound curriculum has been strengthened by a new procedure for teaching reading that has contributed greatly to the improvement in English. It is enriched by a good range of activities that ensure that all pupils, especially boys, are motivated to learn. The quality of teaching is particularly improving in English because this has been a school focus for the last year. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies. In particular, the quality of writing accepted in subjects other than English is not always good enough. This is limiting the progress that pupils make in their writing.

The strong leadership of the headteacher, supported well by the senior staff, is key to this school's success. She has worked effectively to develop the leadership and management skills of other staff so that all are now working together to drive school improvement. Staff and governors are committed to raising standards and improving the education that pupils receive. Governors support the school well. They monitor most

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aspects of the school's work satisfactorily, but the procedures for monitoring the impact of strategies to promote community cohesion are not robust enough. The school has a very accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. This is ensuring that well-targeted strategies for school improvement are implemented to great effect. The school is well placed to build upon its success and improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Promote pupils' writing skills more effectively by consistently ensuring that pupils' writing across all subjects is at the same standard as that expected in English lessons.
- Plan more precise short-term targets for learning for those pupils who have more complex special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the systems for evaluating the impact of the school's actions to promote community cohesion.
- Ensure that pupils are fully aware of the wide variety of cultures to be found in modern Britain.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Learning in most lessons observed was at least good, and sometimes outstanding. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is particularly good in English, mathematics and science. More able pupils are achieving well because much of the work provided challenges them effectively. Some excellent examples of writing were observed. For example, a Year 6 pupil, when writing about embarrassment, wrote, 'A rush of humiliation ran down her spine like a chill twinkling in her toes.' However, fewer boys are producing work of this quality than girls. While work on display shows good evidence of pupils using writing skills in other subjects, there are still some weaknesses in the quality of handwriting and pupils' spelling in these subjects. Pupils do not use their mathematical skills in other subjects to the same extent. Vibrant displays around the school show pupils' good attainment in art, and good quality work was also observed in history and information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils are polite and friendly, and most are confident when talking to visitors to the school. None was concerned about bullying in the school and they trust teachers to deal effectively with any that might occur. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through responsibilities such as peer mediating on the playground or as school council members. The skills gained from activities such as writing applications for these posts of responsibility and the standards attained help prepare pupils well for their future lives. Pupils' contribution to the wider community is developing but remains satisfactory at present. Pupils show great respect for themselves and each other, valuing the cultures represented in the school. They have a good understanding of some other cultures, for example through their study of Africa, but their understanding of the many different cultures to be found in Britain remains a comparative weakness.

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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	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Planning for lessons is consistently good. Teachers explain objectives at the start of each lesson and have good rapport with learners. Where teaching is good or better, pupils show themselves as enthusiastic participants in their learning. Teachers mainly provide tasks that are suitably matched to pupils' stages of learning, but able pupils in particular are not always sufficiently challenged or set rigorous time targets for completing work. As a consequence, the quality, extent and pace of learning are reduced. In most instances, teachers' good questioning, together with use of 'talk partners', helps pupils clarify thinking and consider responses. However, there are times when questions are not sufficiently well focused to support learning and introductions to lessons are overlong, thus reducing the time available for active learning. Throughout the school, teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers make increasingly effective use of interactive whiteboards to provide a visual stimulus for learning.

Pupils know and value having targets. These, together with pupils' increasing involvement in evaluating their own performance as well as that of others at the end of

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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lessons, enables them to become more involved in their own learning. Teachers give pupils valuable and supportive comments during lessons, but marking of pupils' work in books does not always give sufficient indication as to how learners can improve their work.

The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visits and visitors together with a satisfactory number of lunchtime and after-school clubs. French is taught in Years 4 and 5. The good emphasis now given to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, allied to an effective range of strategies to support those who need extra help, has had a positive impact on standards. Pupils speak with much enthusiasm regarding their use of computer technology. This reflects good improvement by the school regarding the use of ICT as a tool to support learning. For example, as part of their work on Africa, pupils in Year 6 researched and then produced impressive word processed work under the title of 'Ethiopian News' and 'An Interview with Mandela'. A review of pupils' work shows further improvement in science where a strong emphasis is now placed on investigational work. Pupils are much enthused by the revised approach to learning. Boys are better motivated to learn by the more exciting and creative curriculum. As one pupil commented, 'Teachers make our lessons really interesting. We learn new things every day.'

The school provides well for those considered vulnerable and, to this end, maintains good links with other professionals and agencies. The school has yet to develop fully its provision for pupils identified as gifted and talented. A comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, supported by residential trips and work related to gaining Healthy School status and Activemark, gives pupils a good understanding of the need for safe and healthy lifestyles. Pupils are well known to adults, and are confident that teachers will respond quickly to any problems. Effective procedures help pupils settle quickly whenever they join school and help those in Year 6 prepare for their next stage of education. Provision of the much-appreciated breakfast club is a further way in which the school supports its pupils and families.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior management team have high expectations for the school and have already demonstrated the ability to improve standards. Monitoring of teaching and learning is good and information gained is used well in performance management and to guide the

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high quality professional development. Assessment data are scrutinised well to check on the attainment of different groups of pupils, to ensure equality of opportunity and to set challenging but realistic whole-school targets.

Procedures for safeguarding are outstanding. Senior staff and governors have a very clear understanding of what is required to keep pupils safe. Child protection procedures are excellent with extremely rigorous training and regular updates on procedures for staff and governors.

The governing body is very supportive of the school, although it is currently under strength. Governors visit the school regularly to observe its work and meet with staff. These visits are closely linked to the priorities of the good school development plan, and governors hold termly reviews of progress against this plan.

Governors and senior staff recognise that the systems for monitoring the impact of strategies to promote community cohesion are not robust enough. Nevertheless, the school is effective in ensuring social cohesion within its own local community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are very pleased with the school. In the written responses, some parents praised the school with comments such as, 'My daughter is now more confident in everything that she does', 'Mrs Bailey and her staff are doing a good job' and 'Lessons are fun but very educational.' A few parents, although giving great support to the school, made some negative comments such as, 'Although my son is making good

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progress, he is not pushed' and 'Communication is poor ' my child has behaviour issues and does not get help.' Inspectors agree that some pupils are not challenged enough but do not agree that pupils with behaviour issues do not get help, or that communication with parents is poor.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beechwood 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 32 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 167 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	50	16	50	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	44	16	50	2	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	41	17	53	2	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	47	13	41	3	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	38	18	56	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	44	16	50	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	38	17	53	3	9	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)	9	29	21	68	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	38	14	44	4	13	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	28	20	63	3	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	34	20	63	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	41	18	56	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	47	16	50	1	3	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.



2 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beechwood Junior School, Southampton, SO18 4EG

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed talking with you and reading your work, especially the 'Ethiopian Echo' and your writing about Nelson Mandela.

Yours is a good school. Here are some of the things that we liked most:

- Your learning has improved a lot over the last two years. By the time you get to Year 6 you achieve better standards than most schools, especially in English and mathematics.
- The school looks after you well and gives you good guidance, which is why you have a good understanding of how to stay safe and keep fit and healthy.
- The teaching is good. Teachers make learning enjoyable and fun for you. We can see why you enjoy school.
- You make a good contribution to the life of the school through jobs such as school councillors or playground buddies.
- The school is well run by the headteacher and staff.

To help the school get even better, we have made a few suggestions for improvements to help you learn better. We have asked the school to:

- make sure that your writing in subjects other than English is as good as that in your English books - you can help by always writing carefully and checking your spelling
- give those of you who find learning difficult small steps for improvement to help you reach your targets
- find better ways of checking on how well they help you understand about living alongside others in the community
- find more ways to help you learn about all the different groups of people in Britain.

Thank you again for your help in finding all this out.

Best regards

Yours sincerely

Stephen Lake

Lead inspector

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