

# Bowlsh Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123672
<b>Local Authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	340393
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 March 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Carnaghan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	108
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr H Strik
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Burden (acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Wells Road Shepton Mallet Somerset BA4 5JQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They spent over half of their time looking at learning and saw eight lessons and four teachers. Meetings were held with teachers, pupils and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at its planning, monitoring, policies and other records and scrutinised 52 parental questionnaires.

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

- how well the school operates under its temporary leadership
- the school's recent assessment information, to help to judge pupils' progress
- whether writing standards are improving
- the quality of the school's self-evaluation.

## Information about the school

Bowlsh Infant School is smaller than average. Approximately two thirds of its pupils are boys and it has a lower-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The largest group of these pupils has speech, language and communication difficulties. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. At the time of the inspection the school was led by an acting headteacher.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

Bowlsh Infant School provides a satisfactory education. It is in a period of transition, having had temporary leadership for the last two terms. The acting headteacher, strongly supported by governors, has 'held the fort' well. She has introduced new assessment procedures, has maintained standards and ensured that the school runs smoothly.

Parents, carers and pupils rate the school highly, enjoying the benefits of its small size. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are pleased they are so well cared for, one correctly reporting, 'We can always go to our teachers.' Parents and carers are happy with virtually every aspect of the school and express no significant concerns. One comment, typical of many, was, 'Sending my child to Bowlsh was the best thing I have done for her. I am informed regularly of progress, she is thriving and loves attending this school.'

Children start well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching in the Reception class is consistently good. Their personal and social development is especially strong and achievement is good. Less focused teaching in Years 1 and 2 means Key Stage 1 progress is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 2 are average, but are a little lower in writing. Strong support for all pupils ensures that there is no unevenness in their achievement, which is satisfactory.

Teaching varies in quality. Pupils' learning in lessons is at least satisfactory, but low expectations, periods of slow pace and inconsistent promotion of literacy mean that pupils' achievement, especially in writing, is not improving as quickly as it should be. Lessons are usually enjoyable and benefit from pupils' enthusiasm for learning and good behaviour. Good assessment triggers extra support and teaching assistants make a notable contribution to all pupils' progress. The qualities of the curriculum are lifted by very good enrichment through visits, visitors and extra-curricular clubs. Pupils are well known to all staff and well cared for. Those who need extra support to overcome barriers receive it, and all groups are well integrated into school life. Pupils have a good grasp of what it takes to grow up healthily, appreciating the nutritious food on offer and relishing numerous, varied opportunities to take exercise. The school has a good awareness of its local context and works closely with local partners; links with institutions further afield are less well developed.

Formal and informal monitoring have enabled leaders and governors to keep an eye on provision. However, limited checks on teaching have not promoted consistency or encouraged sharing of good practice. Governors have used their good understanding of the school to offer constructive, relevant support during this transition period. Detailed long-term planning has not been updated and awaits the new headteacher in April.

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Consequently, the school's capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' standards, particularly in writing by
  - ensuring teaching consistently challenges pupils and always focuses on pupils' learning
  - improving the pace of learning so pupils are kept at full stretch in all phases of the lesson
  - using pupils' varied curriculum experiences to provide additional stimuli for writing.
- Build on and extend links with schools in contrasting environments, improving pupils' understanding of other communities.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>3</b>
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Pupils enter Year 1 with the expected standards for their age, but a little lower in writing. The school is aware of this trend and is slowly starting to offer better writing opportunities. Because some teaching does not always focus on learning and can lack pace and challenge, the writing standards of current pupils remain a little lower than those in reading and mathematics. Pupils' standards by the end of Year 2 are average, as they have been for some years. Given their starting points, this means that the achievement of all pupils, including boys and girls and those who have speech, language and communication difficulties, is satisfactory.

Consistently good or better behaviour has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Bullying is very rare and quickly dealt with by the school. Classrooms are busy, orderly and productive, with pupils keenly listening to their teachers and enjoying their work. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are mature and constructive. Pupils keep a close eye on one another, especially those in Year 2, who take responsibility for the youngest ones, and they understand how to keep safe around the school. Attendance has been above average for some years.

The school council is new this year and has not yet fully established itself. While it provides a good forum for pupils to make their voices heard, its actions have not had a significant impact on the school. Pupils work well as members of the school community, maintaining its harmonious ethos. They raise money for needy causes both locally and in the wider world, such as the local air ambulance and the Haitian earthquake appeal. Pupils develop skills of independence and cooperation very well and make satisfactory progress in gaining important skills in word, number and computer. Their progress in developing social skills and moral understanding from an early age is commendable. Developing liaisons with schools in contrasting parts of the United Kingdom and the world are beginning to promote pupils' better understanding of other cultures.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

### How effective is the provision?

Pupils enjoy lessons. One reason for this is that they are well supported in their learning by a talented team of teaching assistants. Teachers manage and relate to pupils very well so individuals usually remain strongly focused on their tasks. The curriculum has many interesting elements. For example, pupils regularly go on interesting trips to places like zoos and cathedrals. Many visitors enliven pupils' days offering different and interesting experiences in science, drama, sport and other areas. There are numerous, well-attended clubs; the gym club is particularly popular and has been expanded to accommodate demand.

Teaching is inconsistent. There are variations in lesson planning, the pace at which lessons run and the challenges they offer. At its best, teaching is lively and engaging and sets strict deadlines at all stages of the lesson. Mixed-age group classes benefit from good planning that usually distinguishes between different groups and allocates staff perceptively to support each one.

In some sessions, where no deadlines are set, pupils' work rate tends to diminish as they carry on with their tasks. There can be a lack of clarity in learning objectives, which are not regularly shared with pupils when lessons begin. The closing elements to lessons are not well enough planned and sometimes do not revisit or consolidate what has been learnt, nor do they set the agenda for future learning. Teachers do not always take opportunities to develop writing based on pupils' more interesting experiences, such as

<sup>1</sup> 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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visits and visitors.

Pupils' work is well marked and staff discuss with pupils how it can be improved but, where there are written targets, they tend to be overgeneralised and unhelpful. Newly improved assessment procedures help to track and predict pupils' progress and regular analysis of the data triggers extra help for those who need it.

Staff work closely together to ensure that all pupils are well supported. Pupils know there are numerous adults to help them through their day and good relationships mean that it is easy for them to raise concerns. They are confident that the school takes their worries seriously and acts on them promptly. The intimate atmosphere of the school means all pupils are well known to teachers and other adults. Pupils who experience barriers to learning, such as speech, language and communication difficulties, are well supported both by school staff and 'if needed' outside expertise. Consistently effective work to promote good attendance has ensured high attendance.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The interim arrangements have been effective in enabling the school to function normally, but have limited its ambitions for wide-ranging change. The acting headteacher has implemented much-needed improvements to assessment procedures but it has proved difficult for the temporary leaders to evaluate all aspects of the school. Although teaching has been observed, insufficient follow-up has meant that inconsistencies remain. The size of the school has meant that other staff have been unable to offer tangible support to the acting headteacher. Planning for this year correctly identifies the most important priorities, but there are no plans for 2010/11 pending the arrival of the new headteacher.

Governors have supported the school fully during the period of temporary leadership. Their regular monitoring means they are well informed and so can challenge and support as required. They are well aware of safeguarding issues. Safeguarding is satisfactory. School records are thorough and well organised. Policies to keep pupils safe are all in place, but the checking of them is not sufficiently systematic.

The school has strong links with parents, to the benefit of pupils' progress. Parents are on friendly terms with staff and are well informed about daily school life and their children's work. The school successfully mitigates against the limitations of its size by nurturing good partnerships with numerous organisations. The local school's cluster,

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linking it with other local schools, shares expertise and training for staff. Visiting experts bring new perspectives for pupils in numerous areas, including sport. Strong links with the local authority and outside agencies support many pupils facing challenges.

The school has a good awareness of its local context and works closely with local partners, for example jointly planning a 'world day' event with other local primary schools. It is aware of the need to link with institutions further afield and has started a bilingual link with a Welsh school and is at an early stage of linking with an Indonesian school. The inclusive nature of the school ensures equal opportunities for all and that there is no discrimination.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff use the very good links with local early years groups to carefully evaluate the aptitudes and needs of all children before they join the Reception class. Children demonstrate a wide range of aptitudes, but this excellent preparation enables them to settle quickly into their new school and make good progress. By the time they move into Year 1, children are very well prepared for more formal education and their standards are at the levels expected for their age, if a little lower in communications, language and literacy. This demonstrates good achievement. Children's personal and social development is very good, setting the pattern of good behaviour and strong relationships that is evident across the school.

Teaching is very well planned to provide an interesting and challenging range of opportunities. It strikes a nice balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities.



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Teaching uses new technology innovatively to promote good learning. For example, small voice recorders at work-stations hold instructions for each activity, so children can press a button to hear their teacher reminding them of what they should do. Children's choices are facilitated by strong support from teaching assistants, helping them develop strong independence. There are well-planned opportunities to play indoors and out, but the nature of the school building does not easily lend itself to a free flow of children to and from the outdoors.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is thoughtful and efficient. All staff have a good knowledge of what is required in this age range, ensuring children are safe and their needs met. Children are regularly assessed by all staff, and these notes and photographs build up a comprehensive record of achievements which is regularly shared with parents. Good assessment enables those who need extra help to be identified early and support starts in their first month at the school. Teaching assistants are skilled; effective planning means they are deployed to where they are most required.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

**Views of parents and carers**

Parents' and carers' views reflected in questionnaires are very favourable. No significant concerns were raised and many wrote comments that warmly praised the school's caring ethos. Parents and carers were particularly positive about pupils' happiness and the way the school keeps pupils safe. All respondents were happy with their child's experience at the school.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bowlsh Infant 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 52 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 108 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	65	16	31	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	77	12	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	27	52	23	44	2	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	29	58	20	38	0	0	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	36	69	16	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	48	25	48	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	58	20	38	2	4	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)	26	48	20	38	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	54	22	42	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	62	20	38	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	54	23	44	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	62	22	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	71	15	29	0	0	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



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18 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bowlish Infant School, Shepton Mallet BA4 5JQ

Thank you for the nice welcome you gave to the inspectors when we recently visited your school. It was good to meet such well behaved and happy children! Bowlish Infants is a satisfactory school. You enjoy lessons and are keen to learn, so you make satisfactory progress and leave with standards that are about the same as most Year 2 boys and girls across the country. Some of your lessons are good but others can be too slow and do not give you enough chances to write. You are well cared for and the mix of subjects you do (called the curriculum) is good.

The acting headteacher has kept the school running well in preparation for when the new headteacher joins you after Easter. She has brought in some new ideas, too. I have asked the school to make more improvements:

- teaching should raise your standards by making lessons more pacy and challenging and giving you more opportunities to write
- your school should develop more links with other schools in different areas of the UK and the world.

Once again, thanks for all your help. It was very good to meet you.

Yours sincerely

John Carnaghan

Lead inspector

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