

Bishops Down Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118468
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379625
Inspection dates	20–21 March 2012
Lead inspector	Jon Carter

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Russell
Headteacher	Dan Turvey
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 June 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jon Carter

Additional inspector

Clementina Ogunsanwo

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by 10 teachers and visited the wraparound care provided in the breakfast and after-school clubs. They listened to pupils read and discussed different aspects of their work with them. Meetings were held with representatives from the governing body, members of staff holding leadership responsibilities at the school and groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, the school's analysis of pupils' progress, curriculum plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of the school leaders' lesson monitoring. Inspectors also analysed responses from the 99 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Bishops Down is larger than the average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of a Nursery class for part-time attendance, with morning and afternoon sessions, and two Reception classes. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly average although a greater proportion than usual has a statement of special educational needs. This is because the school has specially resourced provision pupils with physical disabilities and complex medical needs which provides specialist support for up to ten pupils, who are fully integrated into mainstream classes. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school has a smaller than average percentage of pupils of minority ethnic heritage. A smaller than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club. The school meets the government's floor standard, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. There is a strong focus on improving pupils' achievement, involvement and well-being. Pupils and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that the school has a happy, caring and family-like environment. The school is not outstanding because teaching and the checks made on its quality are not yet leading to pupils' outstanding achievement.
- Pupils, including those in the resourced provision, make good progress and reach above average levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress in reading and mathematics is consistently good across the school. However, not all pupils in Key Stage 2 are making as rapid progress in writing although most are responding well to recently introduced initiatives.
- Teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement. Well-targeted professional development for staff has improved assessment practice and lesson planning. However, teachers do not use their written feedback well enough, as a tool for improvement, for pupils in Key Stage 2. In writing lessons for this age group, the learning intentions are sometimes insufficiently clear, limiting the progress pupils can make. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are often provided with highly tailored, effective support.
- Pupils' well-developed sense of equality reflects the school's very successful work in promoting understanding of disability and difference. Pupils' positive attitudes towards others ensure that bullying is rare, pupils feel safe and behaviour is good. In some classes, pupils demonstrate excellent skills in managing their own behaviour.
- School leaders use self-evaluation and performance management processes efficiently to ensure that teaching continues to improve. However, they do not always rigorously evaluate the impact of improvements on pupils' progress. Consequently, some improvements have not been driven forward quickly enough to secure accelerated progress, especially in writing.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 2, so that all pupils make consistently good or better progress, by:
 - ensuring lesson planning identifies clear and specific learning objectives where writing skills are being taught
 - ensuring pupils understand what they need to do to achieve their writing objectives
 - providing clear written feedback that guides improvement
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to respond to written feedback
 - sharing the best practice in the teaching of writing throughout the school.

- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of teaching by ensuring that:
 - school leaders rigorously analyse the impact of school development planning and actions on improving pupils' progress
 - checks on teaching quality routinely record and revisit areas for development identified during observations, particularly in writing.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development which are usually in line with expectations. Reading skills develop well through constructive interaction with staff when learning about letters and sounds. Children are challenged well while developing their writing skills through activities such as 'freeze frame' that provide good opportunities for them to write simple sentences. Activities such as these have been the basis for improvement recently in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and ensure that children make good progress and enter Year 1 with attainment that is often above average. Pupils achieve well overall in Years 1 to 6. In lessons, they respond particularly positively to opportunities that allow them to experiment and work in small groups. For example, in a science lesson for Year 1, pupils worked together to investigate the connection between the length of their hands, and how many cubes they could hold. They gave thoughtful responses, using mathematical language to describe their findings.

Since the previous inspection, pupils' writing skills have developed more slowly than those in reading and mathematics. However, recent improvements in teaching to ensure focus on spelling and grammar have led to better progress in lessons. As a result, the gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing is now closing, although it is too early to see the full impact of improvements on the progress made by some pupils in Key Stage 2. However, inspection evidence and pupils' current work indicate that attainment in writing and mathematics is above average by the end of Key Stage 2, as is attainment in reading at the end of both key stages.

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Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, especially those who receive support for their physical disabilities and complex medical needs, also make good progress. Parents and carers are rightly of the opinion that the progress their children make is good.

Quality of teaching

Lesson planning makes increasingly good and effective use of a range of assessment information in response to focused staff training. Targets for pupils form the basis for feedback and pupils' own assessments of their learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers identify clear learning objectives and specify precisely what pupils need to do to demonstrate that the objectives have been achieved. However, there remains some inconsistency in how well objectives are communicated to pupils during writing lessons in Key Stage 2. Consequently, these pupils do not always reach the goals set for them because they are unclear about what they are trying to achieve. Occasionally, planning for Key Stage 2 pupils does not cater as well for some individuals as it does for the rest of the class because tasks provide a level of challenge which is not as closely matched to their needs as it could be. The use of clear written feedback with examples and short tasks to guide pupils in this age group to improve their work is not as good as it is in the rest of the school, particularly in the marking of writing.

Teachers' enthusiastic approach takes good account of pupils' interests through appropriate and planned adaptations to the curriculum. Activities are typically well presented as a wide variety of tasks to suit different learning styles. This engages pupils well. Purposeful links are made between subjects through activities that have strong connections with the real-life application of the skills being learned. This also contributes strongly to promoting pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Most lessons feature good questions that develop learning effectively, because teachers set high expectations for pupils' responses, ensuring that time is given for developed answers. This was demonstrated well during a Year 6 English lesson, where questions from pupils were reflected back to provide challenge and opportunity to think more deeply about the text being studied.

Teaching assistants are usually deployed well to support the learning and progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This ensures that their independence is promoted during challenging learning activities, particularly for those with physical disabilities and complex medical needs. A very large majority of parents and carers feel that their child is taught well at this school. Inspection evidence supports this view overall.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils usually have very positive attitudes to learning and engage enthusiastically with the range of exciting experiences provided in the curriculum and in the breakfast and after-school clubs. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and conduct around the school are typically good. On the few occasions that pupils' behaviour does not meet the high standards set by the school, teachers respond effectively and consistently. Pupils, including those in the specially resourced provision who experience social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, receive good support and positive encouragement. Consequently, disruption to lessons is rare although, just occasionally, pupils in all classes do not always show that they can consistently manage their own behaviour because they need more regular reminders about how to behave.

Pupils cooperate well and work collaboratively with their peers during lessons. Their relationships with staff are strong and friendly. The level of care pupils are shown is frequently referred to by pupils and their parents and carers as 'being part of a family'. This helps to ensure that a positive learning environment exists in all classrooms. Pupils therefore state that they feel safe, secure and are able to contribute fully to lessons. Their attendance is above average and punctuality to school and lessons is good. This is helped by attendance at the breakfast club.

The very large majority of parents and carers have positive views of behaviour at school. A few pupils expressed concerns about behaviour in their responses to the questionnaire. Inspection evidence, including discussions with groups of pupils representing the diversity of the school population and observations, does not substantiate this view. Pupils are clear that bullying of any sort is rare and dealt with swiftly by school staff. They demonstrate a thorough knowledge of how bullying, including cyber-bullying, might occur. Prejudice-based incidents and bullying do not occur because pupils have been taught to have empathy with people who are different from themselves, for example in their beliefs, heritage or ability.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels, including members of the governing body, have a comprehensive understanding of what the school does well and the areas it needs to focus on to improve further. Staff work closely together and share a common vision for the school and its continued development. Consequently, there is a strong team ethos. The systematic linking of staff teams for partnership in planning and development contributes well to continued school improvement, although best practice is not always shared extensively across staff in the different key stages. The improvements in teaching over time show that the school has been able to maintain good achievement for pupils and has good capacity to improve further.

Leaders and managers at all levels promote equality and tackle discrimination well. The caring school ethos and emphasis on whole-school approaches fully include disabled pupils and those with special educational needs from the specially resourced

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provision. For example, regular and increasingly fluent use of signing, throughout the school, promotes more effective everyday communication between pupils and staff. School leaders and governors ensure arrangements for safeguarding pupils are managed appropriately.

Improvements in pupils' progress have been achieved following ongoing professional development, including effective peer mentoring, for all staff. This has been particularly successful in improving assessment practice and promoting the more effective use of questioning. While some aspects of this improved practice are having demonstrable impact, others are less well established. For example, pupils are increasingly involved in assessing the quality of their own learning and that of their peers, but the impact, on pupils' progress in writing, is not fully evident in Key Stage 2. This is because school leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in monitoring how well changes to teaching practices are having an immediate effect on accelerating pupils' progress. Senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning contributes efficiently to school self-evaluation but does not always provide opportunities to check whether previously identified areas for development have been successfully addressed. The school is now addressing this.

Curriculum planning ensures that pupils have access to a broad and balanced programme with good links between subjects and gives pupils extended chances to apply their skills to realistic situations. This engages pupils well, promotes their enthusiasm for learning in and out of school and makes good provision for developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school's breakfast and after-school clubs are attended well and provide a broad range of enjoyable and developmental activities.

Parents and carers comment positively about the approachability of staff at all levels and value the openness of school leaders in listening to and addressing their suggestions and concerns.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bishops Down Primary School, Tunbridge Wells TN4 9SU

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently, particularly those of you who read to us or spoke with us about your work and what it is like to go to school at Bishops Down. Thank you, also, for responding to the questionnaire.

I am writing to tell you about our findings.

- Bishops Down is a good school. This is because pupils make good progress in lessons and treat each other well. You told us, and your parents and carers agreed, that the school is a happy place to be.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in both key stages make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics. Not all pupils in Key Stage 2 make as much progress in writing.
- You told us that your teachers care about you. They have improved how well they assess your learning and plan lessons to help make sure you make progress. They ask you more challenging questions to help you learn. These things help make sure that teaching is good.
- You learn a lot about disability and difference and this makes a big contribution to your school being a safe, happy and friendly place to learn. You told us that this also makes sure that bullying is rare. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is always good, but just occasionally some of you need to take a little more responsibility for your own behaviour in lessons and not always rely on the teacher to remind you about how to behave.
- The teachers who lead your school have made sure that it has continued to improve since the last inspection.

We have asked the teachers and those who lead your school to make sure that:

- everyone in Key Stage 2 makes at least good progress in their writing
- they carefully evaluate how much the changes they make improve your progress in lessons.

You can all help by always taking responsibility for behaving well in lessons.

Yours sincerely
Jon Carter
Lead inspector

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