

Bowmansgreen Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117187
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379371
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Preston

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Quinton-Navarro
Headteacher	Moira White
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2009
School address	Telford Road London Colney St Albans AL2 1PH
Telephone number	01727 767772
Fax number	01727 767770
Email address	admin@bowmansgreen.herts.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 teachers in 20 lessons. Inspectors held meetings with governors, groups of pupils and staff. Different aspects of the school's work were observed and documentation scrutinised, including that relating to safeguarding practices, the school's self-evaluation and development planning, as well as responses to questionnaires from 158 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effective has the school's response been to the recent fall in standards in mathematics?
- Given the changes in staff, what action has the school taken to improve the strength and consistency in teaching and assessment practice?
- What are the key strengths of the care and support systems, including the Primary Support Base, in supporting the needs of all pupils?
- What has been the impact of changes in the governing body and school leadership teams in sustaining school improvement?

Information about the school

Bowmansgreen Primary School is much larger than average and serves the urban village of London Colney, near St Albans. While the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, an above-average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average as is the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has achieved national Healthy Schools status, the Sports Activemark award and the Quality in Study Support and Extended Schools (QiSS) quality mark.

The school has specially resourced provision for special educational needs, known as the Primary Support Base, serving the St Albans and Harpenden areas and providing for children with personal, social and emotional needs and related learning difficulties. Bowmansgreen is also the lead school for the local partnership providing extended services, including family support. The site also includes a privately run after-school childcare service not managed by the school and subject to a separate inspection.

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

This is a satisfactory school with a justifiably good reputation for the care it provides for pupils, including some from the wider local area. Many parents value the way the school successfully supports and engages their children in their learning. One parent commented 'My child goes to school with a smile and comes out with a smile. What more can I want.' The school is effectively led by the well-regarded headteacher and there is a shared staff commitment to further improve pupils' attainment and progress.

Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in school to reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's data indicate an improving trend in pupils' progress in most years, including in mathematics in Year 6, where standards and progress fell recently. The effective support the school provides for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them do as well as other pupils. Similarly, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make consistently satisfactory or better progress. Staff work well together to maintain a purposeful and very secure context that engages pupils and encourages them to act considerately. Consequently, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and say they feel very safe. A considerable number take on responsibilities and most demonstrate a commitment to healthy lifestyles, with many participating in sports and other activities.

Teaching is satisfactory with increasing amounts of good practice. Relationships are good and the learning environment is attractive and well planned. Teachers successfully provide interesting and engaging lessons reflecting the considerable effort made to develop a creative and enriching curriculum. However, in both the main school and Early Years Foundation Stage, too little curriculum time is spent on helping pupils make better progress in developing their literacy and number skills, for example through the use of phonics programmes that help pupils link letters and sounds. Teaching assistants provide effective support, particularly when they are actively participating in group learning activities. The best lessons are well focused on clear and varied learning outcomes but in some lessons the learning activities do not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. Staff work well together to ensure marking shows pupils how they can improve their work further. However, because marking is not linked explicitly to the school's good tracking system, pupils are not clear how it helps them reach their National Curriculum level targets. Care and guidance are strong overall and reflect the school's recognised expertise in this area. The Primary Support Base provides well for a small number of pupils from local

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

schools who have significant personal, social and emotional concerns and who need specialist support. The school is successful in enabling these children to make progress and remain in mainstream education. The school also leads in coordinating family support work for the local consortium and has a successful track record in supporting vulnerable pupils and others with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the school.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together to sustain the positive features of a supportive and inclusive school, while striving to improve standards and progress. The strong focus on staff development and the introduction of new learning schemes have resulted in a steady improvement in writing. The relatively new mathematics programme is beginning to have a similarly positive effect. The recent turnover in staff has slowed some of these improvements but staff morale is high and there is a strong commitment to further improving teaching and assessment practice. The recently established progress and development teams now enable all teachers to be actively involved in monitoring, evaluating and improving the school's provision. The recently changed governing body is supportive and well informed and is playing a greater role in the strategic development of the school. Overall, the school has an accurate picture of its key strengths and weaknesses and has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and assessment in order to enable all pupils to make good progress by:
 - providing learning activities and resources that are sufficiently challenging for all pupils
 - improving marking by linking pupils' learning targets more explicitly to the National Curriculum levels used in the school's tracking so that pupils have clearer goals for improvement.

- Providing more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to improve their literacy and numeracy by:
 - daily use of phonics programmes in Reception and Years 1 and 2
 - increased emphasis on identifying opportunities to use literacy and numeracy across all National Curriculum subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils start school with broadly average standards for their age though their writing skills are below average. Sustained efforts over recent years have steadily improved

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

pupils’ reading and writing so that most now make at least satisfactory progress over their time in school. Standards and progress in mathematics have been slower to improve. The results of the most recent end of Year 6 tests fell sharply. However, the school’s careful tracking shows that the improved mathematics learning scheme is now enabling pupils in each year to reach their expected levels. There is some variation in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory or better progress as do those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Higher-attaining pupils from all groups reach their targets but the school is aware that a significant number of White British boys do not. The school is working successfully to improve the engagement of this group in their learning. These improvements were particularly evident in a Year 6 English class where all pupils were fully engaged and confidently understood and used a range of connectives in their writing. The focus on engaging pupils and improving their progress was well illustrated in a Year 5 science lesson where an experiment on temperature loss demonstrated pupils’ developing understanding of hypothesis testing and the scientific method. The pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the group made good progress by working alongside more-able pupils and participating in the temperature measuring and recording activities.

Pupils like coming to school and their attendance has improved to be average for similar schools. The school has many thoughtful and responsible pupils who are actively involved as school council members, ‘school ambassadors’, playground buddies and helpers. Pupils demonstrate a strong moral sense, indicated in their work with the Police Community Support Officer on risk assessment and promotion of good behaviour in the community. In assemblies, pupils readily respond to questions, listen carefully and show empathy as well as sing with enthusiasm. The increasing cultural diversity of the school and good curriculum links enable pupils to demonstrate some awareness of other cultures, though their cultural development is inhibited by limited links with other pupils of their age nationally and in other parts of the world.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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

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

The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teacher-pupil relationships are good, and almost all teachers in the lessons observed effectively managed their classes in ways that channelled pupils' enthusiasm and focused their attention. Teaching builds in a lot of variety and activities that engages pupils' interest. The best lessons are appropriately challenging for the very wide range of ability in most classes. This was evident in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on measuring volume where pupils worked at three levels of challenge and the teaching assistant was well used to teach the lower-attaining pupils. However, there is often a reliance on pupils producing different levels of work using the same learning materials. The efforts of the progress and development teams efforts have improved marking, including better guidance for improvement. Few pupils relate this advice to helping them achieve their National Curriculum targets.

There has been a concerted effort to improve the curriculum and the school has successfully gained the QiSS quality mark for its work in providing learning opportunities that better engage pupils and increasingly involve parents. The positive response of parents and carers to their children's enthusiasm for school reflects the progress made in enhancing the curriculum and providing a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school is still developing a creative curriculum, making worthwhile links between English and mathematics and the different topic areas. However, given the need to improve pupils' literacy further, too little use is made of phonics programmes and there is insufficient focus on the quality and use of writing and number work across the different subjects in the curriculum.

Many parents and carers took the time to write about the considerable efforts made to settle their children in school or deal promptly and sensitively with any upsets. A number were impressed that the headteacher is at the gate and 'meets and greets every child by name' in such a large school. The school knows and carefully tracks the progress of all pupils and their different needs. The 'Sunshine Room' provides a refuge for the less confident pupils and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Links with a range of different agencies and the local community support the school's work well and staff at the school support colleagues elsewhere.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
--------------------------------	----------

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

Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 school’s leaders have sustained a strong drive for school improvement though their efforts to improve attainment and progress. This has been slowed by staff turnover and sickness, and a steady intake of pupils joining the school who need additional learning support. Even so, the school’s various strengths are well recognised by parents and carers and by the community, with which it maintains a positive relationship. Its partnership links are used well to support its own pupils, particularly in assuring their well-being as well as collaborating with and supporting partner schools within the local partnership.

As an inclusive school, staff have a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. This is evident in the careful tracking and support of all groups and individuals. There are no consistent or significant differences in the achievement of girls and boys and strong school provision means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do at least as well other pupils. On average, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make better progress than middle ability White British pupils some of whom are less well motivated. The school has acted decisively, and with some success, to engage those pupils fully and improve their current progress through improvements in teaching and the curriculum.

The school has produced and has begun to implement its community cohesion strategy. There are strong local community links and the school uses the curriculum and the cultural diversity within the school to broaden pupils’ awareness of the wider society. However, this area is rightly seen by the school to be an area for improvement and current development work is taking place, particularly in the national and international context.

The relatively new school leadership structure based on four progress and development teams provides a good basis for improvement. The governing body has undergone considerable change in its membership and provides satisfactory governance. It has established a sound understanding of the school and a clear view of its role. Its members are very committed and key governors are exceptionally strong in their understanding and expertise in child protection matters and health and safety practice in schools. They work closely with the headteacher to set very high standards for the school’s safeguarding procedures. These include ensuring very secure school boundaries, careful vetting of the many school volunteers and clear procedures for identifying and supporting pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those identified as being ‘at risk’.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	2
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress from starting points which are a little below expectations for their age. They have broadly typical attainment in their personal, social, emotional and physical development by the time they leave. This is reflected in children’s ability to cooperate, share apparatus and choose activities. Opportunities for children to develop their skills in reading, writing and number work are not as regular as they could be and overall attainment is below that expected for their age at the end of the Reception year. Parents and carers are very positive about their children’s experiences. They come to a welcoming environment in which they settle quickly and feel very safe. There are strong partnerships with outside agencies and parents and carers who praise the secure, well-established transition arrangements. The range of learning strongly supports children’s personal, social and emotional development as well as giving them opportunities to be creative. Behaviour is well managed and helpful in preparing children for their later years in school. The inside and outside areas are attractive and provide a range of experiences for child initiated activity. However, given the lower starting points of some children in terms of their literacy and numeracy, there too few opportunities for them to learn through more structured and adult-led activities. The staff work well as a team and regular training ensures they keep abreast of new initiatives. Equipment is deployed effectively and the environment and facilities have been considerably enhanced in recent years. Assessment is regular and used appropriately to compile children’s learning journals and plan children’s future learning opportunities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
--	----------

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

Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The very great majority of parents and carers are very positive about the way the school supports and cares for their children, especially those with particular needs. In their numerous written comments they appreciate the efforts the school makes to get to know their children in such a large school and make learning enjoyable. They value the accessibility of the headteacher and staff and the responsiveness of the school to any concerns. A small number of parents and carers did not agree in their responses to the questionnaire that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour, though very few explained why. Inspectors noted that the school provides for a number of pupils with particular behavioural and related learning needs. These pupils require and receive carefully planned support that enables most to work successfully alongside other pupils. This is helped by the consistently good and considerate behaviour pupils show to their teachers and each other.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bowmansgreen Primary 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 158 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 364 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	70	43	27	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	111	70	43	27	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	82	52	71	45	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	90	57	59	37	5	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	87	55	68	43	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	55	67	42	2	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	85	54	71	45	1	1	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)	68	43	75	47	4	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	84	53	65	41	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	42	76	48	4	3	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	35	87	55	5	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	103	65	51	32	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	112	71	39	25	5	3	1	1

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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bowmansgreen Primary School, St Albans, AL2 1PH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Your school gives you a satisfactory and improving education, and ensures that most of you achieve as well as you should by the time you leave.

You clearly like coming to school and feel it is a very safe place to be. We liked the considerate way you treat each other and behave well in lessons. We noted that many of you take responsibility as school council members, are school ambassadors or act as buddies to younger pupils. Many of you eat healthily and we were impressed with the wide range of activities and sports that many of you are involved in.

Very many of your parents told us how much you like coming to school and appreciate the efforts of your teachers to make learning fun. We noted that your attendance has improved in recent years, though it could still be a little better. Standards have also steadily improved and to help this continue we have asked teachers to set out what exactly they want you to learn in a lesson. We have also asked them to match classwork more closely to your individual needs and make sure you are all fully challenged. Your teachers mark your work regularly and often tell you how you can improve it. This is very important and we have asked them to do more of this and show you how you can improve your National Curriculum levels, particularly for writing and mathematics. To help you make even better progress in your reading, writing and number work we want the school to give more time in lessons to help you improve.

The headteacher, the school governors and all the staff are working hard to improve the school further. You can all help by attending school more regularly, improving your written and number work and continuing to play an active part in school. Thank you again for being so friendly and helpful on our visit.

Yours sincerely

Graham Preston
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**