

INSPECTION REPORT

BEDGROVE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110280

Headteacher: Mr D S G Fiske

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jean Harding
21378

Dates of inspection: 24th – 25th September 2002

Inspection number: 250590

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ingram Avenue Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP21 9DN
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr A Benbow
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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There are several other aspects in which the school has made significant improvements over the last four years. The National Curriculum test results have improved, especially in science. Pupils' standards of attainment in the investigation aspects of mathematics and science have improved. The curriculum has been enhanced, particularly in the emphasis on pupils' consistent use of information and communication technology. The procedures for assessment have improved. The accommodation has been extended and is now much better. More resources have been acquired, especially computers. In other aspects the school has maintained the same high standards that were reported before. The governors and headteacher were conscious that, in the light of such a good report in June 1998, they would have to work hard to demonstrate improvements. This they have done, but they are not complacent and still strive for even better performance. Given the current staff and governors, the prospects for further improvement are good.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools ¹
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	A	A	B
Mathematics	A	A	A	B
Science	B	B	A	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

There are, as yet, no standardised comparisons for the test results for this year (2002). The percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 is about the same as in 2001. In English 89 per cent of pupils attained the required level compared with 75 per cent nationally. In mathematics 84 per cent of pupils attained the required level, compared with a 73 per cent national average. In science 98 per cent of pupils attained the required level, compared with a national average of 86 per cent. However, a bigger percentage of pupils attained higher grades in mathematics and science than before. In English, 46 per cent of pupils attained a higher grade compared with the national average of 29 per cent, which is the same as last year. In mathematics 50 per cent attained the higher grade, compared with 28 per cent nationally, and this included two pupils who attained two grades above the expected level. In science, 73 per cent of pupils attained the higher level, against 38 per cent nationally. These grades were from a group that was not particularly able, including a few pupils with special educational needs. The targets for that year-group were exceeded, especially in science. The targets for 2003 have been set using predictions based on previous tests; they are lower than the grades obtained in 2002, and the pupils currently in Year 6 are more able. Given all that has been done, the school might consider raising the targets.

These test results reflect the standards of attainment in evidence during the inspection. Standards in these core subjects are high, and rising, especially in mathematics and science. The evidence also shows that pupils of all abilities achieve well and that all make at least good progress during their time in the school. Pupils of lower and higher ability do particularly well. A few pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. There is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls in evidence in the school, but boys attain higher grades than most boys nationally. Also, within the school, boys do better than girls in mathematics tests. There is no difference in the attainment of pupils of different backgrounds, or for those of non-white ethnic origin.

This short inspection did not examine work in most other subjects, but the small amount of work seen showed that standards of attainment in other subjects are at least in line with national expectations for pupils of this age, and certainly above expectations in information and communication technology. Pupils use their skills of learning well in other subjects, particularly listening, reading, writing, and information and communication technology. Pupils' skills in speaking, although good, are less well developed.

¹ 'Similar schools' are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils concentrate very well and make great intellectual efforts in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good, especially in lessons. There have been no exclusions and bullying is not a problem.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships between all pupils, and pupils and staff. Pupils' personal and social development is very good.
Attendance	Very good. Much better than many schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and evidence of teaching over time is that the quality is very good. As a result pupils learn very well, are aware of their own learning, and know how to improve. Staff generally have very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and basic skills are taught very well. The planning of lessons is good, especially in the inclusion of information and communication technology in all subjects. However, although work is planned to meet the needs of all pupils, the formal recording of this could still be better. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high and they use a very good range of strategies and resources to enhance their lessons. Teachers' management of their pupils is extremely good and is based on excellent relationships and a good-humoured atmosphere in the classes. Classroom assistants are used well and they give very good support to teachers, both in the classrooms and during withdrawal sessions for pupils with special educational needs. Lessons generally go with a swing but the pace in a significant number is rather too leisurely, and this reflects the long time given to lessons on the timetable. Marking is very good and ensures that pupils know how to improve their work. Homework is generally consistent and is used well to complement work in the classroom.

Due to the emphasis on presentation, pupils show great pride in their work. Pupils work hard, both for the sake of the study, but also to please their teachers. They show enormous interest in their lessons. Most are acquiring good skills of independent learning, although this could still be better if they were set more independent tasks and used research tools on their own more. Pupils of all abilities learn very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	It is very broad, reasonably balanced and highly relevant to pupils' needs. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities and great use of the outside world to promote learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good and effective. The school makes good use of the advice from the local education authority.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory in reality, but there are few procedures to ensure that all these pupils have a curriculum that is entirely appropriate to their needs. There is no policy for action, and no specific assessment of these pupils' language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, and particularly good for pupils' social and moral development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a very caring school and its procedures to ensure pupils' welfare are very good. The assessment of pupils is also very good and the results of testing are used well to ensure pupils' progress.

The timetable could be planned more efficiently; some lessons are too long, and the work expands to fit the time available. These long lessons in some subjects reduce the time available for other subjects and religious education. Lesson planning rarely specifies the opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural thinking, and this is an area for further development. The school makes very effective efforts to extend the learning of more able pupils. It also makes great efforts to involve parents in their children's education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is strong leadership at all levels. The headteacher sets very high standards. He is well supported by the deputy head and senior staff. Co-ordinators lead their subjects very well. The management of almost all aspects is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Extremely well. They are very involved and know what to expect and how to make improvements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Governors know the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school understands the principles of obtaining the best value and generally uses these very well. Financial planning is very good.

The accommodation and resources are good and used well. There are plenty of staff, but the turnover of teachers is a threat to the school's continuing success. There is a 'whole-school' feeling that benefits pupils due to the teamwork on the staff that it engenders. There are good procedures for checking the quality of teaching, however, these could be improved.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p><i>That their children:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like school; • make good progress; • behave well at school. <p><i>That the school:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides good teaching; • is well led and managed; • has high expectations and expects the pupils to work hard; • is approachable if they have questions or concerns. 	<p><i>A small minority of parents:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are unhappy about the homework provided; • would like more information about how their children are getting on; • would like the school to work closer with them; • would like more activities outside lessons.

Parents are strongly supportive of the school. They think it is a very good one, and the inspectors agree with them. The evidence supports all the parents' positive views. Nothing was seen during the inspection to support the negative views of some parents. Homework is well organised and there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The headteacher is usually available, especially at the beginning and end of the school day, and staff welcome parents' participation, and are happy to discuss any aspect of the school's work or parents' concerns.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Pupils have standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science that are well above average in all aspects of the subjects, and they use their key skills of learning, including information and communication technology, well in other subjects.

1. Pupils join the school with standards of attainment in these subjects that are, overall, above national averages and expectations, and they leave with standards that are well above average. The standards are high because pupils are taught well and have excellent attitudes to their lessons.
2. Pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 is well above average. In all three subjects pupils are over two terms ahead of the national level when they leave the school. No standardised comparisons are yet available for the 2002 tests, but the statistics suggest that the school has done very well. The percentage of pupils who attain higher levels in the tests is high, although this year (2002) only 27 per cent attained a higher level in writing, and 23 per cent attained a lower level. Although this reflects a less able group in that year, the school is aware that this is an area for improvement. The 'whole-school' writing tasks have been instigated to boost pupils' attainment in writing, and are having a positive effect. Half the pupils attained a higher level in mathematics this year, including two pupils who attained a Level 6, which is two grades higher than expectations. Nearly every pupil attained at least the expected level in science this year, and a commendable 73 per cent got the higher level. In 2001, pupils attained grades in science that were well above those found in similar schools.
3. The quality of work seen during the inspection also bears out the positive picture of standards painted by the test results. Pupils' standards of all aspects of English are well above average in listening, reading and writing. Pupils have good speaking skills but very high standards were not evident during the inspection. Pupils are mature and enthusiastic readers. They read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction and know how to retrieve information from the library. Pupils from all year-groups told inspectors that they undertake little research of their own, such as using the library, and this is an area for improvement. Pupils' standards in writing are above those expected and well above in some aspects. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and have a clear handwriting style. They produce written work in a range of styles and can structure their work well. Some pupils produce too little and this is a disadvantage in tests.
4. Standards in mathematics are also well above average and in this subject many pupils have made very good progress since they joined the school. Pupils in the top sets attain some very high standards, especially in work on shape and measures, and pupils in lower sets mostly attain at least average standards by Year 6, and their calculations are founded on secure understanding. Many pupils in Year 5 are already working at the level required for pupils at the end of Year 6.
5. Pupils' attainment in science is well above average, in all aspects of the subject. The school has paid particular emphasis to scientific investigations, and this has been very successful in ensuring pupils' understanding and secure scientific thinking. Pupils in Year 6, for instance, can explain gravity and friction and can discuss fair testing to check on these forces. The co-ordinator is aware that the work on investigations, and pupils' knowledge and understanding of the principles, could still be improved; she has active plans to set targets for individual pupils and for groups in this most important programme of study.
6. Very little work in other subjects was observed or scrutinised during this short inspection, but that seen was at least in line with national expectations. However, checks were made on pupils' attainment in information and communication technology and their use of these skills across the curriculum, because the school has put so much into this subject. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is above average, and well above in some aspects. The school has made very good use of its large investment in computers and related equipment and pupils confidently access and use information from a variety of sources and can present work elegantly

using information and communication technology. They work at above the expected levels in all the programmes of study.

7. There is no difference in the attainment that can be put down to pupils' different backgrounds, ethnic origin or home language. All pupils are tracked through the school to check how well they are doing. Pupils are tracked by gender and so the school is aware that boys do not attain as well as girls in writing, as is often the case nationally. Staff have put in place appropriate procedures to deal with this, and there are very good male role models, which may inspire boys to do well. However, boys have better grades in the national tests than boys nationally, and better than girls in mathematics within the school. There was little evidence to suggest that boys' and girls' attainment was any different during the inspection, although the tendency for boys to take longer to get down to work was noted. Pupils are not tracked by their home language, and this is a weakness which the school should address.
8. Having acquired the key skills of learning, pupils use them well in all subjects. Pupils listen very well to staff. They rarely need instructions, or to have information repeated, and show, by their sensible questions, that they understand what is required. Most are confident and articulate when speaking, but are not as fluent as they might be when talking on a formal level. Although drama is built into the curriculum, the school does not sufficiently plan for extension work in speaking, such as formal debate and presentations by pupils, which might enhance skills in speaking. Pupils use their reading skills well across the curriculum. Few older pupils need any help, but a significant number in the current Year 3 classes, do not have well enough developed reading skills to be able to cope with the technical vocabulary of subjects such as mathematics.
9. Pupils use their writing skills very well across the curriculum. Their work is very well presented and usually properly spelt and punctuated. Word-processing is used appropriately, but perhaps more use could be made of this for pupils to draft and re-draft work, instead of re-writing their final draft. Pupils' mathematical skills are used well in other subjects, such as science and geography. Pupils know which calculation to use in order to process information. Elegant graphs and charts are produced using information and communication technology, which is also used well in other subjects. Pupils know how to use computers to access information as well as to present their work beautifully. Pupils' use of information and communication technology is much better than is seen in many schools and this school's investment in advanced technology has proved very effective.

Pupils of all abilities make at least good progress in their learning.

10. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires and at the meeting with inspectors, almost all parents felt that pupils of all abilities made good progress. Parents of more able pupils and of those with special educational needs felt the same. Inspectors agree with parents. The school makes good efforts to provide work that is appropriate to the needs of all pupils and the results of this is clear to see in the National Curriculum test results, especially for higher or lower attaining pupils. However, the 'average' pupil has not been forgotten and suitably challenging work is set for all pupils.
11. A few parents are critical of the school, as pupils are not set by ability for English. The structure of the National Literacy Strategy enables staff to give all pupils work appropriate to their needs in English and, generally, all pupils make at least good progress. Pupils with the greatest difficulties have extra help during withdrawal sessions and this is effective, but still they would benefit more if account were taken of their particular difficulties within lessons in other subjects. The school makes good use of the expertise of local education authority specialists in assessing pupils with special educational needs.
12. The school's policy of grouping pupils by ability in mathematics has proved highly effective when considering the achievement of all pupils. Older pupils, who are very able, work in small groups, on a regular basis, and this is proving very successful in extending their mathematical thinking and also their confidence in trying new ways of looking at problem solving. More able pupils are definitely not set work that is too easy. Pupils who find mathematics difficult are appropriately supported in lessons, and some make especially good progress in consolidating their learning.