

Bowhill Primary School

Buddle Lane, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon EX4 1JT

Inspection dates

23–24 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership. Together with other leaders and governors, she has improved teaching through establishing a culture of high expectations for all and effective support for teachers.
- Leaders accurately understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Those new to the leadership team are supported well by those with more experience. They are beginning to develop the skills necessary to enable them to contribute fully to the school improvement process.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly and are now good. As a result, pupils' progress is good and standards are rising. An increasing proportion of pupils are achieving close to, or above, the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are making much better progress in writing than in previous years. However, the progress of some pupils is slowed because their spelling is sometimes inaccurate, the range of vocabulary they use can be limited and they sometimes lack chances to develop their skills in other subjects.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, are challenged to do their best and achieve well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Their needs are identified quickly and they receive well-targeted support.
- Governors have significantly improved their knowledge and skills since the previous inspection. They now have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and are increasingly able to hold leaders to account.
- Children in the early years settle quickly and confidently into school. They get off to a good start because of effective teaching and the care and support they receive.
- Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to improve their work. However, between classes, the implementation of the school's marking and feedback policy is not consistent.
- Pupils feel safe and very well supported at school. They are polite, friendly, well behaved and very proud of their school. They work hard and appreciate the many opportunities the school provides for them.
- Parents expressed their confidence in the school to teach their children well and to keep them safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership of the school further by making sure that new members of the leadership team receive ongoing training to equip them fully with the range of skills they need to carry out their role effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching of writing so pupils make even better progress by making sure that:
 - the accuracy of pupils' spelling improves
 - pupils have more opportunities to write in other subjects
 - teachers consistently adhere to the school's marking and feedback policy
 - pupils are encouraged to read a wider range of texts to help them experience and understand a broader range of vocabulary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and other leaders form a strong and committed team. They have successfully communicated their strategic vision for the school, which is based on high expectation and aspiration for all. Alongside governors, they have successfully raised the quality of teaching so that the progress pupils make is good and continuing to improve. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and its journey of improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers and other staff embrace the opportunities they have to engage in training to improve their practice. Regular monitoring by leaders ensures that staff receive frequent feedback, with guidance on what went well and what could be improved. Staff at an early point in their careers value the good support they receive.
- Staff who were at the school at the time of the previous inspection feel that the school has improved significantly. They are proud to be a member of the school and agree with the school's focus on challenging pupils to make at least good progress.
- Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive and identified many positive aspects. Comments such as: 'The school provides a secure and nurturing environment where all children, regardless of ability, are valued and engaged by lessons taught by great teachers,' captures the flavour of the many positive comments made through the Parent View survey, or shared with inspectors during the inspection.
- Leaders use the school's assessment systems to identify pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning. Resources, including the support of additional adults, are well targeted to get pupils back on track with their learning. Additional support is monitored carefully to check that it is having the impact expected. Appraisal and performance management procedures are used effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class.
- Strong leadership of mathematics has been instrumental in bringing about rapid improvement in teaching and the progress pupils make in this subject since the previous inspection.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points because their needs are accurately identified, and the support they receive is well targeted. Provision for these pupils is led well, and good links with support agencies exist to complement what the school provides.
- Some leaders are new to their roles. They receive support from more experienced leaders to ensure that they know how to bring about the change needed to secure improvement. Training is ongoing and is beginning to help them to develop the expertise and skills necessary to be strong, effective leaders in their own right.
- A culture that promotes modern British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates all aspects of the school. Tolerance and respect for others are strongly evident throughout the school. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about the views and faiths of others.

- Leaders and governors have made sure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent appropriately. The rationale for allocating the funds is based securely on information gathered about the barriers to learning being experienced by pupils. Because of this sharp targeting of the funding, disadvantaged pupils currently at the school, including those who are the most able, are making good, and sometimes rapid, progress. A full evaluation of the impact of this funding has yet to be shared with parents via the school's website.
- The physical education and sport premium additional funding is used well. Increased numbers of pupils are participating in after-school sport and the range of sports on offer has broadened. Pupils have opportunities to engage in competitive sport through, for example, football fixtures against other local schools. The school makes use of sports coaches to improve pupils' skills, and also to train teachers so that the quality of the teaching of physical education and sport can be sustained into the future.
- The overarching curriculum is broad, balanced and enriched by a wide variety of during- and after-school clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils enjoy the range of activities they engage in and develop good personal skills and positive attitudes to learning as a result.

Governance of the school

- A review of governance was carried out after the school's previous inspection. Governors have worked diligently to address all the issues the review raised and are now in a much stronger position to carry out their roles and responsibilities. They have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work closely with the headteacher and other leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve. They are aspirational for all those involved in the school and uncompromising in their drive to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Governors understand the school's plans for improvement. Their monitoring of these plans enables them to challenge school leaders and hold them to account for pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Information on the school's website sets out clearly the ethos and procedures for safeguarding pupils. Staff are trained appropriately and have a good understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Staff are encouraged to talk about any concerns sooner rather than later, so that appropriate early action can be taken. Leaders work productively with outside agencies and will challenge other professionals to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Good relationships with parents are fostered so that they receive appropriate support and guidance which, in turn, helps to keep pupils safe. The work of the parent support adviser is valuable in this respect. Pupils, parents and staff were in agreement that pupils feel safe, and are safe, at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved because of the resolve of the headteacher, other leaders and governors. Teachers have embraced the opportunity to improve and have responded well to the feedback they have been given after monitoring, and the training they have received.
- Teachers make good use of assessment information when planning to match their pupils' learning needs well. Regular checks mean that any difficulties pupils may have are identified and addressed quickly. If necessary, previous learning is revisited to make sure that pupils can move on from a secure starting point. This approach has been particularly successful in improving pupils' learning and the progress they make in mathematics.
- Teachers know their pupils well and understand any barriers to learning they may have at any given time. They use this information to guide the organisation of groups of pupils and to target specific additional support so that those at risk of falling behind are helped to catch up. Similarly, pupils who need to be challenged more are provided with opportunities to move their learning on quickly.
- Teachers use a range of strategies to assess individual pupils, and groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged. This makes sure that teachers have a secure view of the standard of pupils' work and their progress over time. Teachers are particularly skilled at questioning pupils of all abilities to check their understanding and to challenge their thinking. They make good use of a wide variety of resources to support and enrich pupils' learning.
- Pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations of their engagement and behaviour. Good relationships between adults and pupils allow pupils to feel confident and able to 'have a go' without fear of failure. Pupils are happy to learn from each other. When they spot an error, they sensitively help each other to recognise and correct it. When working as a class or on their own, pupils show good levels of resilience and will persist in completing a task even when they find it challenging.
- Teachers make good use of the school's additional adults to support pupils' learning. These adults work skilfully with pupils to help them to complete their work themselves. They provide appropriate levels of support and guidance depending on the activity and pupils' particular needs. They also deliver specific interventions to tackle identified barriers to pupils' learning, including difficulties related to pupils' speech and language development.
- Increasingly, pupils are able to use their reading and mathematical skills to support their learning in other subjects. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their writing skills in other subjects.
- Phonics is taught well in a systematic, progressive way, with the result that pupils become skilled at tackling unfamiliar words when reading. Pupils of all abilities, including the most and least able, make good progress in reading. However, typically, pupils choose to read the same type of book time after time. This is limiting their exposure to a rich and varied vocabulary.

- Although pupils have good phonic knowledge, they do not always apply this to their spelling. Spelling is not taught in the same way as phonics and, as a result, pupils lack the strategies to spell accurately. They make simple errors that impede the overall quality of their written work.
- Most teachers adhere to the school's policy for providing pupils with feedback that helps them to improve. Pupils are confident that this support from their teachers helps them to move on quickly with their learning. This positive picture is not consistent between classes across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured and take great pride in their achievements and their school. They value their education and the support they receive from their teachers and other adults. They speak enthusiastically about what they need to do to learn successfully and welcome feedback from their teachers on how to improve.
- Pupils particularly enjoy being able to work together to think through challenges and find solutions. They understand that they are not all working at the same level, and are supportive of each other. They listen with respect to each other when expressing views or providing explanations. They know that good learning includes making mistakes, and work hard to correct their errors.
- Pupils are keen to expand their horizons and embrace the opportunities provided to take part in sporting and artistic activities, and to travel beyond the school site on field trips and residential visits. They are very proud of representing their school and achieving success, such as winning a mathematics competition between local schools.
- Parents, pupils and staff feel strongly that the school is a safe place to be. Trusting, respectful relationships help pupils to be able to share any concerns they may have. They feel supported by adults and are confident that if they have a problem, it will be sorted out because they will be listened to. Pupils are clear about what bullying is and say that it is not an issue at the school, but that if it did happen, it would be dealt with by adults.
- Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe online and are helped to understand how to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour. Through the curriculum, they explore how people hold different views, and are encouraged to develop respectful and tolerant attitudes towards others. Pupils' appreciation of these skills is clearly evident in the way they respond to each other during lessons and when at play during breaktimes.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Pupils are friendly, polite and courteous. They move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. Lunch- and breaktimes are enjoyable social occasions because pupils behave well and are caring towards one another.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons and respond promptly to instructions from adults. Disruption in lessons is uncommon, but if it does occur, pupils respond quickly when reminded of the school's expectations.
- Pupils appreciate the school's reward systems that help to ensure that the school is a safe place for them to be. They understand how these systems improve their experiences at school and, with adult support, how pupils whose behaviour may be challenging are helped to improve.
- The attendance of pupils is better than that of other pupils nationally and reflects pupils' enjoyment of school. Work with pupils and their families to minimise persistent absence is successful so that it is well below the national figure.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Across year groups, pupils currently at the school are making good progress from a wide range of starting points across subjects. Many pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged and the most able disadvantaged, are exceeding the progress expected of them. This is ensuring that weaknesses evident in the standards reported for past pupils, including in 2016, are eradicated. Through the school, most pupils are now performing much better than in previous years, with most achieving at least at the standard expected.
- Observations in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and talking to pupils about their learning show that their progress over time is speeding up, particularly in English and mathematics. The progress made by many pupils in mathematics has been especially strong as a consequence of the school's focus on improving the subject.
- The teaching of phonics is good. An above-average proportion of pupils consistently reaches the standard of the Year 1 phonics screening check, and by the end of Year 2, almost every pupil has done so.
- Pupils are encouraged to talk about their learning in some depth. This has supported improvements in mathematics as they are able to reason and think about their work. Pupils confidently share their ideas and explanations, which helps them to deepen their understanding. A similar process is now being promoted when writing is the focus of learning to extend pupils' language skills.
- Pupils' progress in writing, while much improved, is not as marked as in mathematics. Pupils write for a range of purposes, and construct their work well. Weaknesses exist in the range of vocabulary used by some pupils and the accuracy of their spelling. However, standards are improving as pupils rise to the challenge of raised expectations. They make particularly good progress when the feedback they receive from their teacher clearly shows them how to improve.
- Pupils read fluently and well, relative to their age and stage of development, including the most and least able. They enjoy reading and make good progress. When choosing books to read, however, pupils do not always select texts that stretch them as readers or provide them with experience of a broad range of vocabulary.

- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are challenged and do well. They relish the opportunity to tackle more difficult work, particularly in mathematics. This is reflected in the often rapid progress many are now making.
- Disadvantaged pupils who need additional help to improve receive good-quality, targeted support. Activities such as those at the 'breakfast maths club' ensure that any difference between their performance and that of other pupils nationally is rapidly diminishing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well to make good, and sometimes very good, progress from their individual starting points. The close monitoring of these pupils contributes significantly to the progress they make because it ensures that the support they receive is sharply focused on their specific needs.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View and those spoken with during the inspection were of the view that their children are making good progress, and that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The good progress pupils make in subjects such as science, history and geography is supported by the planning of activities that engage and motivate pupils. Practical activities, visits and homework tasks that encourage pupils' creativity and the opportunity to work collaboratively contribute well to pupils' understanding and skills.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader has high expectations for all children. Having identified the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, she has engaged successfully with adults in the early years team to improve the quality of teaching. Improvement in the way phonics is taught, and the opportunities that children have to talk and to write, are ensuring that children make good progress. These remain priority areas so that children continue to be well prepared for Year 1.
- Good links with local pre-schools and parents ensure that children settle happily at school. Parents feel well informed and able to come into school to talk to an adult should the need arise. They are encouraged to get involved and take a full part in their child's development.
- Children are monitored carefully and adults are alert to their welfare and safety needs. Relationships between adults and children are positive, and children form good relationships with each other. Adults manage children well and have high expectations of their behaviour. Children respond very well and develop positive attitudes to learning. In this supportive environment, children show an enthusiasm for learning and are keen to engage in the activities provided.
- Most children entering the early years classes this year have skills broadly typical for their age. Differences are noted from year to year, but typically children's skills on entry are lower than those found this year. Throughout the day, the mix of adult-led and child-chosen activities successfully engages children and supports their learning well. Regular checks are made on children's progress and activities are modified to ensure that their learning, from whatever their starting point, moves forward at a good rate.

- Children feel safe at school. They confidently explore and investigate their environment and use their imagination in their play. Activities inside and outdoors motivate and encourage children to be active and to work together. In the outdoor area, for example, children took on the roles of police officers trying to find a robber. Their play was sustained for a long time as they coordinated their actions and discussed strategies for finding the robber. Their play enhanced not only their social skills, but also their language and physical development.
- Planning of activities takes good account of children's interests. Resources are well chosen to ensure that activities are challenging but accessible. The indoor and outdoor areas are organised to provide a wide range of activities that support different areas of learning. Children move confidently from one area or activity to another, concentrate for good periods of time and persevere with tasks.

School details

Unique reference number	134174
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10019964

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	468
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth O'Neale
Headteacher	Caren Brooks
Telephone number	01392 206585
Website	www.bowhill.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@bowhill.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium funding on its website.
- Bowhill is much larger than the average-sized primary school. There are three classes in the Reception Year. There are mixed-age classes for Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school, and looked at pupils' books from Years 1 to 6 and evidence of children's work in the early years. Information about pupils' progress and attainment was considered alongside their work. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and special needs coordinator joined inspectors for many of these activities.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders, governors and members of the teaching and support staff. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority. The views of staff were gathered from Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The views of parents were considered, including the 102 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 71 comments made as part of the Parent View survey. In addition, several parents were spoken to when dropping their children off at school.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including evidence of leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's plans for improvement, the management of teachers' performance, and curriculum planning. Records relating to safeguarding arrangements were examined, including information about attendance.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors spoke informally with many pupils. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils to hear them read and to gather their views on their learning and the school.

Inspection team

Alison Cogher, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Abigail Staff	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Hanrahan	Ofsted Inspector

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