

Birchington Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118693
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379663
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Helen Howard

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iain Cousins
Headteacher	Kathleen Barham
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 March 2009
School address	Park Lane Birchington CT7 0AS
Telephone number	01843 841046
Fax number	01843 846034
Email address	headteacher@birchington.kent.sch.uk

Age group	5–11
Inspection date(s)	7–8 March 2012
Inspection number	379663



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child’s school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.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 2012



Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Howard	Additional inspector
Peter Hare	Additional inspector
Howard Jones	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 28 lessons taught by 15 teachers. They met with pupils and listened to them read. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and various members of staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school documentation including its self-evaluation, monitoring procedures and data about pupils' progress. Inspectors also analysed the views of 121 parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires.

Information about the school

Birchington Church of England Primary is much larger than the average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above that found nationally and has increased since the last inspection. More than one third of pupils has disabilities and/or special educational needs. The majority of these has behavioural, emotional or social difficulties. The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a turbulent period. There have been significant changes in staffing including leadership and management.

The school has a number of awards including Artsmark, and the Eco School Green Flag. 28 clubs, managed by the school, run every day outside of lessons.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, the school has overcome difficult circumstances and improvements have been made in a number of areas including in English, mathematics and attendance. It is not a good school because aspects of teaching need improvement and tracking of progress for pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is not fully effective.
- Pupils' attainment is broadly average. Progress in writing and mathematics is improving rapidly as a result of the impact of a sustained whole-school focus in recent years. Groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make satisfactory progress overall, although a few pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties do not make progress at the same rate.
- While the majority of lessons are good or better, this is not consistent enough to raise the overall quality of teaching above satisfactory. The brisk pace seen where teaching is good is not evident in all lessons and consequently a few pupils make slower progress. Higher ability pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks. Pupils do not always know specifically what they need to achieve in lessons.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They are friendly, courteous and get on well together. Behaviour is good as a result of high expectations and a wide range of strategies to support those who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Attendance, which has been a focus for improvement, is now above average.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, have sustained improvements in key areas since the last inspection, particularly in achievement in mathematics and attendance. Effective performance management of staff is ensuring that teaching is improving at a good rate. While the tracking of pupils' progress is generally good it does not consistently track the progress of those pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a

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

monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2012, improve teaching to consistently good so that pupils' attainment is raised to above average by:
 - ensuring that success criteria are consistently used in each lesson so that pupils know what they should achieve.
 - making sure that higher ability pupils have work that is matched to their needs.
 - ensuring the pace of lessons is good.
- Ensure that pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make accelerated progress by tracking their achievements more effectively.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children start school with skills and attainment that are well below that normally expected of this age group. They make satisfactory progress including in the Early Years Foundation Stage and reach broadly average attainment in both English and mathematics by the time they leave school. Attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average and improving. As one parent said, 'My son used to struggle with reading but has come on in leaps and bounds and now reads books for fun.'

Almost all parents and carers feel that their child is making good progress in school and the large majority of pupils agree that they 'learn a lot'. However, the inspection team considers that it is satisfactory overall because pupils are not always challenged to work at a brisk pace and they do not always know specifically what they should achieve. Pupils generally work at a steady pace to complete tasks and respond well to opportunities to work collaboratively. Where there has been a specific focus, for example in improving writing and mathematics skills, progress is accelerating. This was evident in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where pupils made good progress in testing different methods to find percentages of numbers. Pupils were able to explain in detail how they had worked out their answers and, by the end of the lesson, they knew the level of their work and what they would need to do to improve.

Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who have special education needs make satisfactory progress and the gap between their progress and that of all pupils nationally is closing. Good support is given to pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and successfully helps to reduce barriers to their learning. There is not though enough focus on the impact of this support on their achievement and, consequently, a few make slower 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

Quality of teaching

All of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are taught well. While teachers generally have high expectations and ensure that lessons enthuse and engage most pupils, the inspection team considers that a minority of lessons lack challenge for higher ability pupils and, consequently, they make slower progress. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching have been effective so that there is now effective use of questioning and assessment to support learning.

Effective modelling and good questioning are now common features of lessons enabling pupils to reflect on their learning. This was seen in a Year 6 guided reading lesson. The teacher's questions to a small group of pupils were targeted so that all of the pupils could respond to the text at their own level. Pupils are able to work well on their own and in a minority of lessons they are developing high levels of independent skills. The use of 'talking partners', where pupils discuss their work with each other, is embedded across the school and is very successful in enabling all pupils to contribute to, and share, learning. Where teaching is good or better, the brisk pace motivates and enthuses pupils, but this is not the case in all lessons.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is satisfactory overall and there is an appropriate balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities. Adults successfully develop children's good attitudes to learning. The regular phonic sessions, which link letters and sounds, provide a secure foundation for children to learn to read well. Parents attend phonic sessions in school and they are positive about the support they are receiving to help their child, including an effective demonstration video on the website. Pupils who find reading or spelling difficult use these skills to break down the sounds of words.

Data are used effectively by teachers to plan lessons and provide progression between lessons and year groups. Teachers' marking informs pupils about how well they are doing, together with specific comments about what they need to do next. For example, in Year 6 literacy books, written dialogues between the teacher and pupils about how their work was improving is helping pupils to edit their own work.

A range of activities in lessons encourages pupils to develop good social skills and pupils work very well together as a result. Improvements in teaching and the curriculum provide more opportunities for creativity and enable pupils to develop curiosity about their learning. Teaching takes account of the diversity within the school and, consequently, many pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are able to overcome barriers to their learning. 'Success criteria' which set out important points for pupils to remember in order to do well are displayed in lessons. Pupils say that this helps them to know what they have to do to achieve their target levels. The use of these is not consistent in all lessons and as a result pupils do not always know what they need to achieve in order to be successful. Pupils respond well to artistic and creative opportunities and participate in a range of

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

clubs and activities outside of lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school's high expectations and consistent approach in managing behaviour enable pupils to behave well. At the heart of the school's values is its Christian ethos and pupils are encouraged to be tolerant and respectful of others. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire feel that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school and that their child feels safe. Inspectors found behaviour to be good in lessons, around the school and in after-school clubs. However, pupils set themselves very high standards of behaviour and a minority of pupils feel that behaviour could be even better. Pupils are very polite and courteous, work well together and respond well to teachers' instructions. They show positive attitudes in lessons but are not always offered enough opportunities to manage their own learning.

There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils which are established in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where adults have high expectations of children's attitudes and behaviour. Adults are skilful in providing engaging activities that develop social skills.

Pupils are aware of what constitutes bullying and say that it is very rare. They say that they trust the adults and are confident that any incidents will be dealt with well by the school. In information and communication technology lessons, pupils are helped to understand the risks associated with social networking sites and cyber bullying and they say that they feel very safe in school.

One of the strengths of the school is its range of provision, including external services and effective teaching assistant support, to help pupils who have behaviour difficulties. As a result, there are many examples of these pupils making good progress in managing their own behaviour over time.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and governing body have shown determination in securing improvements in the school despite challenging circumstances. There are sustained improvements in achievement and attendance. This demonstrates a secure capacity for further improvement. The governing body gives a good level of support and strategic leadership. Governors carefully monitor the school's performance. Good arrangements for safeguarding ensure that pupils feel safe in school and during after-school clubs.

Leaders and managers provide effective role models in securing improvements. They give professional support to teachers including peer support, coaching and training. Together with effective partnerships with local primary schools and the local authority, this is resulting in improvements in the quality of teaching overall. Pupils

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

are enthused and motivated to do well. Consequently over time, pupils' achievement is improving.

The curriculum offers a broad range of themed activities and provides imaginative approaches, leading to improvements in progress, especially in mathematics and in writing. Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities as part of the Eco School activities which encourage them to consider how to look after their environment. Pupils' art work is of a high quality and there are many exciting displays around the school. There are opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in different contexts and for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about other beliefs and cultures and develop a strong sense of right and wrong.

Leaders and managers take steps to ensure that they promote equality and, as a result, groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in the school. Discrimination is rare but effectively tackled. Consequently, the school is a harmonious and happy community. As one parent said, "my son always looks forward to going to school. Overall I am very pleased with Birchington Church of England Primary School."

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.



8 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Birchington Church of England School, Birchington CT7 OAS

You may remember that three inspectors came to visit your school recently. Thank you for such a warm welcome. We could see how friendly and polite you were and how well you get on with each other. You told us that you enjoy coming to school. Birchington Church of England School provides a satisfactory education and it is improving.

We saw how much you enjoy learning, especially when teachers let you know how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve your work. Some of you think the work is too easy sometimes. We agree that is not always challenging enough for all of you and also think that you need to know in more detail exactly what you need to achieve in lessons. We could see that you really enjoy creative and practical activities. We were impressed by the art work around the school and the work that has been led by the Eco School council.

You told us that the school deals with bullying well, but told us there was very little of it. Most of you think that behaviour is good, although some of you feel that it could be even better. We judged that you behave well in lessons and around the school. The headteacher and other leaders and managers have been effective in making a lot of improvements so that you can make better progress.

We have asked the school to do two things to make it even better.

- We have asked all teachers to make sure they use success criteria and targets effectively so that you know which level of work to do. We have also asked them to give some of you even more challenging work and to see that the pace of lessons is good.
- A few of you have extra help to behave well. We have asked the school to show that you make all the progress you can in lessons as a result of this support.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Howard
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.**