

Burlescombe Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113350
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357325
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Palmer
Headteacher	Stephanie Hooper
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed six lessons taught by three teachers and held meetings with staff, members of the governing body and a group of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to pupils' attainment and progress, self-evaluation and development planning, and to keeping pupils safe. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 47 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- The progress of current pupils in English and mathematics, to see if the improvements in achievement in 2010 are being maintained.
- The extent to which teaching meets the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities in each lesson, especially for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 2 who are taught in the same class.
- The quality of pupils' personal development, to see if it is better than the school assesses.
- The impact of subject leadership on pupils' progress, especially in Years 1 and 2.

Information about the school

The school is of much smaller than average size and serves a village and surrounding rural area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning or behavioural difficulties, varies year on year but is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a class with pupils in Years 1 and 2. The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2010. A pre-school occupies part of the building. This is not managed by the governing body and was not inspected on this occasion.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as is shown by their high attendance. They make a particularly strong contribution to the school and wider communities through activities, such as membership of the school council, acting as playground buddies, or by taking part in local and regional events. Links with the Church of England are strong and make a significant contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and greatly enjoy sport and exercise. The good curriculum gives them plenty of opportunities to work indoors and outside, to collaborate with each other and to work independently, although the development of their skills in the use of information and communication technology is a relative weakness.

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and the well-planned lessons are conducted at a good pace. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics tests is average and improving. High attainment was seen, for example, when pupils in Years 5 and 6 discussed the arguments for and against the use of genetically modified foods. As a result of effective self-evaluation, senior leaders identified a weakness in pupils' skills of mental mathematics and have rightly focused on this aspect of the curriculum. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were seen excitedly sharing the high marks they attained in a mental speed test. Teachers use good-natured competition between pupils very effectively to promote rapid progress. Good support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables these pupils to make similarly good progress to their peers. Pupils behave well, but on occasion they become over-excited which leads to high noise levels in the small classrooms. However, pupils' good progress in their learning and good, and in some respects excellent, personal development lead to good overall achievement.

Pupils are cared for well. Arrangements to keep them safe meet requirements, the school having been able to quickly rectify some minor shortcomings while the inspection took place. New children are helped to settle quickly, and by the time they leave, pupils are well prepared for secondary education. Pupils' high attendance and the fact that all make equally good progress demonstrate the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity.

Under the leadership of the dynamic acting headteacher, improvements, such as in attainment in mental mathematics, have been brought about through effective self-evaluation. Ambitious plans for the future are shared by the school community. Members of the governing body work tirelessly to support and challenge the school, but the governing body carries a number of vacancies including that of the position of clerk. This places an unreasonable burden on existing members and, to some extent, on school staff. The school is in a period of rapid change and some matters, such as the future leadership

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and governance of the school, remain unresolved. Nevertheless, the high morale of staff and the success of actions taken to bring about improvement mean that the school has a good capacity to bring about further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology by:
 - ensuring they have access to suitable equipment to enable them to practise their skills
 - planning lessons that give pupils an opportunity to practise their skills in a variety of contexts.
- Improve the capacity of the governing body to support and challenge school leaders by:
 - filling vacancies and the position of clerk by the summer of 2011
 - timely resolution of uncertainties about the future leadership and governance of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

A notable feature of the school is the pupils' enthusiasm for learning. This shines through in activities as diverse as finding synonyms for words, where pupils in Years 3 and 4 compete to provide examples of increasing sophistication, or when playing sport, such as hockey in the playground. They support each other very well in lessons, such as in Years 1 and 2 when carrying out simple subtractions. Children start school with skills and knowledge, especially in their social development and communication, language and literacy, which are below what is expected. Attainment in national tests in English and mathematics has improved steadily and the school's good records of current pupils' progress, and scrutiny of their work, show that further improvement is taking place. In spite of the wide range of ages and levels of attainment present in each class, most notably the class for children in the Reception Year and pupils in Years 1 and 2, good planning of lessons and effective use of teaching assistants ensure that the work meets the needs of each individual. As a result, all pupils make similarly good progress. Overall, the skills pupils will need in later life, such as literacy, numeracy and independence, are developing well, but they have limited opportunities to develop their skills of using information and communication technology.

Pupils rightly say they feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to stay safe in their rural environment. They say there is little bullying and that disagreements are mostly resolved without adult intervention. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures and faiths, through study of religious education and by meeting visitors, such as African musicians. Thought-provoking assemblies and strong links with the church lead to particularly good spiritual development.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of assessments of pupils' progress to plan lessons that meet their wide-ranging needs. Pupils assess their own and each other's work, which, together with helpful marking by teachers, enables them to gain a good understanding of how to improve their work. Pupils are confident when answering questions as teachers value everyone's contribution. Occasionally, the cramped nature of the classrooms slows learning when pupils are required to reorganise for a new activity. The local environment, including woodland and a nearby canal, is used well to broaden pupils' understanding and to teach them to assess risk. As a result, they are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about environmental matters. Good use is made of links with other schools, for instance through dance tuition by students in Year 10 at the local secondary school, or through competitive sport against other local small schools. Resources for pupils to learn skills of information and communication technology are limited in both quantity and quality, which restricts teachers' opportunities to plan lessons that enable pupils to practise these skills.

Staff know the pupils and their families well and as a result are able to provide good care. The school is particularly successful in maintaining high levels of attendance as changes in patterns of attendance are quickly spotted and investigated, so that any necessary support can be given. Parents and carers are made welcome in school, for example some were seen observing, or even taking part in, the playground 'fit ids' session that starts the

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school day. A number of parents or carers made comments, such as: 'You are welcome at any time to discuss any issues about your children.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Although in post for a relatively short time, the acting headteacher has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has made a good start in tackling the latter. She has a clear longer-term vision for the school's development which is increasingly shared by members of the wider school community. Middle leadership, for example of literacy, numeracy and the Early Years Foundation Stage, is of good quality, as is shown by pupils' rising attainment and good progress across the school, including in Years 1 and 2 where it was weaker at the time of the last inspection. Some major decisions are pending to secure the school's long-term future, including the degree of potential collaboration with other schools. These uncertainties, together with the high level of vacancies on the governing body, have caused some loss of confidence among a small minority of parents and carers. The inspection found no evidence to suggest that pupils' education is suffering as a result.

The governing body carries out its duty to ensure that pupils are safe in a satisfactory manner. All requirements are in place but there has been some slippage in timetables established to review or sign-off policies. These were quickly rectified during the inspection. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion, for example the school council has a brief to monitor how this is happening. Any potential discrimination is not tolerated, thus making a strong contribution to the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children currently start school in either September or January. Good links with pre-schools and effective assessment lead to staff having a good knowledge of each child's stage of development. Learning is tailored to meet individual needs, such as through planning the level of adult intervention needed to ensure that each child makes good progress. As a result, children are well prepared for the more formal approach to learning adopted in Year 1. They make especially good progress in the development of their social, emotional and communication skills. They choose from a range of activities and can explain why they have made their choice. For example, a child started a 'find the bear' game, and others joined in when they saw his enthusiasm. On occasion, organisation of the large class with its wide range of ages takes time, temporarily slowing learning.

Children are well cared for, as seen in the way they are taught to select suitable clothing when playing or working outside. Children have access to a stimulating classroom and a varied outdoor environment which has suitable cover when required, although opportunities to use information and communication technology are limited. The provision is led and managed well, with good use being made of the strengths of the staff team. There are good plans for further development. Parents and carers are made to feel welcome and rightly have confidence in the provision.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The inspectors' questionnaire was returned by 65% of parents and carers, which is above average. Almost all believed that the school kept their children safe and encouraged them to lead healthy lives. They felt well informed about their children's progress.

Small minorities of parents and carers felt the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour, or that their children were not making sufficient progress. No evidence was found to support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Burlescombe Church of England 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 72 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	30	28	60	3	6	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	21	45	25	53	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	21	31	66	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	13	29	62	9	19	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	15	32	26	55	3	6	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	19	32	68	5	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	32	31	66	1	2	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)	10	21	24	51	4	9	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	32	22	47	3	6	3	6
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	17	26	55	8	17	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	38	24	51	4	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	49	17	36	3	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	34	22	47	4	9	3	6

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 2010 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 2009/10 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.



3 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burlescombe Church of England Primary School, Tiverton EX16 3JH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. A special thanks to those of you who gave up your time to speak to us or to show us your work. This letter is to tell you about what we found.

Yours is a good school. You all make good progress in your work and by the time you leave Year 6, your attainment in English and mathematics is average and improving, especially your mental mathematics. You behave well. Some of you told us there was some bullying, but it is dealt with well. You know how to keep safe and healthy, and you enjoy exercise and a healthy diet. You are excellent at helping other people in school and outside.

You are taught well and those of you who need a bit of extra help are given it, so the teachers and teaching assistants do a good job. Most of your work is interesting and exciting, especially when you work in the local environment. The staff keep you safe and take good care of all of you because they know you well as individuals. The acting headteacher, staff and governing body lead the school well. They have good links with your parents and carers and with other schools, so you are well prepared when you move on to secondary school.

Even good schools can improve, so we are asking the school to give you more opportunities to use information and communication technology in your lessons. There are vacancies on the governing body and, as there is a lot to do, we are asking that these are filled. You could help by suggesting to your parents or carers that they become members of the governing body, if you think they might be interested.

With very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler

Lead inspector

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