

# Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117386
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358130
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Sadler

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	40
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Jagleman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carol Arrowsmith (Interim)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Church End Barley, Royston SG8 8JW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01763 848281
<b>Fax number</b>	01763 848281
<b>Email address</b>	admin@barley.herts.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. The inspector observed nine lessons and three teachers, and other members of staff were seen. The inspector held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers and groups of pupils. The school's work and a wide range of documentation were reviewed. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from staff and from 21 parents and carers were analysed and their responses taken into account.

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

- How well pupils progress in their writing in Years 3 and 4.
- How well teachers ensure that work is challenging for all groups of pupils.
- The extent of the role teachers play in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

## Information about the school

Barley Church of England First School is very small. A large majority of pupils come from the village although an increasing number come from the surrounding area. All the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about half the national average.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, nursery aged children, who attend only for the morning session, are taught alongside reception children. In the afternoons, the reception children join the Year 1 and 2 class. The school provides lunchtime care for nursery aged children. This is managed by the governing body and is included in this inspection. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools status and Sports Activemark.

The school has had two part-time leaders in the last three terms following the absence and resignation of the last substantive headteacher. The governing body is currently exploring the options for greater collaboration with another local school and the possibility of shared headship. The current interim headteacher has been in post since the beginning of the current term.

**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

Barley is a good school. Despite the changes in leadership over the past year, it has maintained its good overall effectiveness. The interim headteacher, staff and the governing body are determined to ensure that the school continues to improve. Staff place a high priority on the pupils' welfare and this results in pupils feeling exceptionally safe and enjoying school. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, especially those that have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are included exceptionally well in school life and they achieve as well as their classmates. Pupils' behaviour is good and relationships are harmonious. Independence and responsibility are promoted well and the pupils are proud of the contribution that they make to the school and the local community. They have an outstanding understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and this is not only reflected in the Healthy School award but also in their knowledge about the importance of exercise and a healthy diet. The partnership that the school enjoys with its parents and carers is outstanding. They were unanimous in their support of the school. Their views are reflected in the parent who wrote, 'My children are extremely happy and well looked after. Staff morale is high and they have worked extremely hard to ensure that the school continues to be a happy place.' Parents and carers are committed to supporting the school and this is demonstrated in the many events that they organise to support learning. In addition, the school provides detailed information about the curriculum and also regular high quality newsletters.

All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress in their learning. The skills and abilities of children starting in the Nursery Year vary because cohorts are small. Overall, they are in line with expected levels. Because provision is generally good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children prosper, particularly in their personal, social and emotional skills. By the time that they join Year 1, most have attained the expected goals, although writing skills are below average. However, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, assessment strategies are not sufficiently well developed. Staff do not make notes of extended observations of the children and the recording of those assessments that are made are not precise enough. In Years 1 to 4, consistently good teaching, linked to a curriculum that has been adapted well to meet the pupils' needs, captures the pupils' interest well. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and, by the end of Year 4, attainment is above the levels expected for pupils' ages. Pupils make particularly good progress in their reading which leads to high attainment. In writing, although attainment at the end of Year 4 is above expected levels, progress is limited by poor handwriting skills. This is because there is no consistent policy for presentation across the three classes. Assessment is satisfactory overall because, as well as the weakness in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in Years 1 to 4, teachers' marking does not provide clear guidance of what pupils need to do in order to move to the next stage in their learning.

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Despite the uncertainties over senior leadership, staff morale is high and teamwork is strong. There is a secure and purposeful vision based on a commitment to improvement and securing the best for the pupils, both academically and socially. Improvement priorities are well-founded and based on close monitoring and an accurate evaluation of the school's provision. All the teaching staff contribute well to school self-evaluation and the resulting effective development plan. When linked to the maintenance of the good features found at the last inspection, these factors demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
  - developing and implementing a school-wide policy for improving pupils' handwriting skills
  - strengthening teachers' marking of pupils' work by providing clear guidance to pupils on the next steps in their learning.
  - Improve the assessment and recording of children's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
    - introducing longer-term observations of children's learning
    - recording assessments made to more precisely match the Early Years Foundation Stage required areas of learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils make good progress in all year groups. Inspection findings confirm the school's data that show that, by the time that they leave the school, attainment is above average. Some Year 4 pupils already attain the standards expected for the end of Year 6, particularly in reading and mathematics. Pupils become skilled at using their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils are proud of the books they made to tell their own fairy tales as part of a topic on castles. Year 3 and 4 pupils, who are currently learning about their body, enjoyed a good quality numeracy lesson, during which the context for a problem-solving activity was to work out the total number of stethoscopes, scissors and bandages purchased when in boxes of three, four or eight. Information and communication technology skills are developed well and even the youngest Nursery aged children learn to control a computer mouse and make very good use of the wide range of programs available to promote their learning.

Pupils' good personal development is a key factor in their good achievement. The school is a happy and safe place because pupils are aware that poor behaviour is rare and is always sorted out by an adult. Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in their above average attendance levels. The school's caring Christian ethos is evident in the way older pupils look out for the younger ones. Pupils relish their roles as school councillors and they recognise how they can make a difference in the wider world, such as by supporting a charity to raise money for a village in India or attending the local Armistice Day service and singing for members of the British Legion. Pupils have well developed social skills and, by the time that they reach Year 4, they develop into mature and responsible youngsters who take a keen interest in the world around them. Pupils relish the many opportunities

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that teachers provide for them to work in pairs and small groups, and these help to develop their interpersonal skills well. Strengths such as these ensure that the pupils are prepared well for their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Staff are generally skilled in ensuring that work is challenging for all groups of pupils. They adjust learning programmes well to meet the needs of the pupils in the mixed-aged classes. Teaching assistants support learning well, especially when working with individual pupils. Teaching is almost always of good quality. Teachers explain and demonstrate clearly and are vigilant during individual or group tasks to intervene if pupils find work difficult. Relationships are positive and the teachers' excellent behaviour management strategies ensure that class or group discussions contribute well to learning and that classrooms have a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Teachers set out clear lesson objectives and ensure that pupils know what they need to do to meet them. However, this is not reflected in their marking of work, particularly in writing. Although comments are supportive, they do not sufficiently refer to the targeted outcomes of work and so pupils are not clear about what they need to do improve.

The curriculum has many strengths, not least in promoting basic skills well. The school has adopted a creative learning approach to provide the starting point for a range of well-conceived topics and themes. These are adapted to ensure that learning is made

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interesting because teachers plan them to build on questions and ideas proposed by the pupils themselves. Provision for music is strong, with all Year 1 and 2 pupils learning the recorder and all Year 3 and 4 pupils learning either cello or violin. The sports partnership enables pupils to benefit from skilled sports coaches and the school's successes are recognised in the awarding of the Sports Activemark. However, there are relatively few additional activities. Visits out of school to enrich learning for Years 1 to 4 are infrequent, as are any visitors that come to the school to enrich learning. When visits do occur, as in the case of the 'Viking' visitor last term, pupils are particularly enthusiastic. The range of extra-curricular clubs is very limited.

Good quality care, guidance and support provides the bedrock of the pupils' strong personal development. Pupils are known well to staff and they say that adults help them when they have difficulties. There are prompt and effective support programmes for any pupils at risk of underachieving. There have been good improvements in guidance given to pupils in the setting of targets which is aiding learning. Nursery children benefit from the good quality childcare programme that operates at lunchtime.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and the governing body, working in close partnership with the parents and carers, have been successful in creating a close and supportive community which benefits pupils' education and welfare. The new acting headteacher has cemented these strengths well and has already brought more rigour and structure to the school's management systems. For example, meetings to review each individual pupil's progress have been introduced and there are plans to develop and build on the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress. The staff work closely with the headteacher. Their commitment and enthusiasm ensures that they support school improvement well. Equal opportunities are promoted well and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated, with staff working hard to ensure that all pupils have access to all the school has to offer. Community cohesion is promoted well and the school successfully ensures that the pupils develop into caring citizens within the school's Christian ethos. There are close links between the school and the church, and partnerships with other schools help to promote the pupils' appreciation of other communities. Links are also being established with schools in Tibet and Sri Lanka to further support the pupils' understanding of the global dimension. The governing body supports the school well and is actively seeking to resolve the issues around the future leadership of the school. The governing body brings expertise to the school in important areas such as health and safety. Good attention is paid to ensuring that pupils are safeguarded and all regulations for child protection vetting procedures are met. The recent

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change in arrangements to monitor the implementation of the school development plan enables the governing body to be more closely involved in checking provision and in the school's drive to secure further improvement.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Even though the arrangements to introduce new children into the Early Years Foundation Stage are limited to one visit to the school, parents and carers report that their children settle quickly. This is because the staff create a warm and welcoming atmosphere and the children benefit from a high level of care, so they feel very safe and secure in their environment. Children develop a curiosity and interest in learning new things, such when the teacher successfully reviewed the visit to a local garage. Children were delighted to see the photographs of the many machines and tools that they saw as part of their project on 'how things work'.

Assessments are satisfactory. No extended observations of children's learning are made. Short-term observational notes and photographs are not sufficiently well annotated to the required Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum to enable accurate planning of future activities. Nevertheless, because there are so few children and they are therefore known well to staff, activities are generally set at a level appropriate to their learning needs. Literacy, numeracy and social skills are given high priority and are taught well. Speaking and listening skills are promoted especially well and the programme for learning letter sounds enhances early reading skills. Children's independent learning skills are strongly encouraged, with many practical activities to achieve this. For example, children worked tirelessly together and carefully explained to the inspector what they had to do to make their flowers grow in the well-resourced outside learning area. They thoroughly enjoyed



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using the good range of tools, wheelbarrows and watering cans to make their own garden in a raised tray.

Staff enjoy a close partnership with parents and carers and they frequently provide activities and ideas for them to help their children at home. Partnerships with partner pre-schools and nurseries are less well-developed.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
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

Parents and carers are unanimous in their support of the school. When talking to the inspector, parents and carers made highly positive comments about both the school's provision and the progress that their children make. Parents and carers also made many affirmative comments about the approachability of the staff and the very positive and safe environment which they create.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First 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 inspector received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 40 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	86	3	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	71	6	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	62	8	38	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	86	3	14	0	0	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)	16	76	5	24	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	67	6	29	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	81	3	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	81	4	19	0	0	0	0

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



9 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School,  
Royston, SG8 8JW**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school. This letter is to tell you what I found. Yours is a good school. The teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and they plan lots of exciting activities for you to do. This helps you to make good progress in your learning. I was particularly impressed with your beautiful singing during hymn practice and also the large and spacious grounds and the many things that you have to do during playtime and lunchtime.

You told me that your school is a happy place and that the adults look after you well. I agree with you, and so do your parents and carers. I was impressed by how well you get on together. Your behaviour is good, you have an outstanding understanding about being healthy. You also feel very safe in school. All the adults work well together to make sure that you make good progress in your learning in all three classes.

Even in a good school like yours there are things to improve. I have asked your headteacher and governors to make sure that your lessons become even better than they are now. To do this, I have asked your teachers to make sure that your handwriting improves and also, when they mark your work, to point out what you have to do to meet your targets. I have also asked that your teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage watch your learning closely for longer periods of time so that they can be sure that you are learning well.

I really enjoyed visiting your school. Thank you for taking time to talk to me. I hope that you continue to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector

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