

Bayford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117387
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379408
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2012
Lead inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Kotting
Headteacher	Peter Jessop
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 16 lessons taught by eight teachers, with a particular focus on how well boys and girls progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. The inspector listened to pupils read, and spoke with parents and carers, groups of pupils, staff, the School Improvement Partner and members of the governing body. The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, school development planning, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching and the questionnaire responses of 50 pupils, 13 staff and 41 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This school is much smaller than average and pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There are more girls than boys in most year groups. Most pupils are White British, with very small numbers coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the current government floor standard for attainment and progress. It has the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools status. There have been recent changes of teaching staff. The headteacher was not in school at the time of the inspection because he had been taken ill. The senior teacher took on the headteacher's role during the inspection.

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

- Bayford provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is not good because there is variation in the quality of teaching and because management systems have not all been rigorous enough. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Assessments at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage have shown above average attainment. Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 fell back after the last inspection and has only been average, although it is on track to be better this year. Attainment in reading is rising for most pupils, but the progress of some is slowed because of variability in the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) and the way in which phonics sessions are organised.
- Teachers are successful in motivating pupils so that they work hard but they do not always plan work that is matched to the range of ability in each class. Tracking of pupils' progress has been improved, and the school has begun working with staff in other local schools to check the reliability and accuracy of each other's assessments.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are eager to learn. They listen carefully in lessons to the teacher and to each other's contributions, although the attention of a few wanes when lesson introductions go on for too long.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders have secured recent improvements in provision and in pupils' attendance; as a result, their attainment this year has risen. However, the monitoring of lessons has not focused sufficiently on the learning and progress of all groups of pupils.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the start of the summer term 2013, increase the amount of good teaching and accelerate pupils' progress in lessons by:
 - always setting work that is matched to the different abilities of the pupils in each class
 - not allowing lengthy periods of passive listening to limit the opportunities for pupils to get on with writing and practical activities
 - routinely giving teaching assistants an active role during whole-class teaching
 - consistently giving all pupils clear guidance through marking that shows them what they need to do to improve their work.

- By the start of the autumn term 2013, improve the school's leadership and management by:
 - focusing leaders' lesson observations on pupils' learning and rates of progress
 - extending opportunities for staff to strengthen their leadership roles by increasing their involvement in monitoring lessons and analysing performance data
 - reviewing the organisation of phonics sessions so that learning is more closely matched to pupils' prior attainment rather than their ages
 - providing training for teaching and support staff so that all are confident in accurately modelling and teaching phonics
 - consolidating work with staff in neighbouring schools to ensure that assessments in each year group are accurate and reliable
 - setting more sharply defined quantified targets in the school development plan against which the leaders at all levels, including the governing body, can gauge the school's success.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

From starting points in the Nursery and Reception Years that are assessed as generally in line with those expected for children's ages, the assessments at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage show good progress and above average attainment. By the end of the Reception Year, the children are confident and articulate, and with a very good understanding of the school's orderly routines.

Attainment in the Year 2 assessments and the Year 6 national tests fell back after the last inspection and has only been average. The school's assessment data and pupils' current work show that attainment is on track to be better this year. The progress of pupils in lessons, including that of disabled pupils and those with special

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educational needs, is consistently at least satisfactory. It is often good in those lessons where work is closely matched to the wide range of abilities and the two age groups in each class. Attainment in reading at the end of Years 2 and 6 has been average but it is rising for most pupils. However, there remain a small number of pupils, including some of those who are disabled or have special educational needs, who still struggle with reading. These pupils are not helped enough by phonics sessions because not all staff are wholly confident in teaching phonics. Children are grouped for phonics only within their individual classes rather than by their skills and capabilities for phonics. This means that the opportunity is not taken, for example, to group, for phonics, able Reception children with Year 1 pupils who are working at the same level.

In 2011, girls' attainment was markedly higher than that of the boys. In both Year 2 and Year 6, the girls were the equivalent of around a year ahead of the boys. This gender divide is a feature of the small numbers in each year group, however. Work in lessons and in pupils' books show that there is not the same difference in other year groups between the achievement of boys and girls.

Parents and carers are happy with the progress their children are making. Though achievement is satisfactory rather than good, the inspection confirms that achievement and progress have shown improvement this year.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory. Relationships throughout the school are good and teachers are successful in motivating pupils so that they work hard and try their best. As a result, almost all pupils say that the teaching helps them to make progress. Parents and carers, too, are very positive about teaching at this school. Many voice very strong praise for the quality of teaching, although a small number express worries over the disruption to learning caused by mid-year changes of teachers.

Pupils especially enjoy practical activities, and the most successful lessons set them tasks that make learning memorable. For example, glitter placed on the hand of a pupil, who shook hands with others, demonstrated very graphically how germs are transmitted and are not always removed by washing. Ultra violet light illustrated that glitter and, by inference, germs were still present after the hand had been rinsed. This activity, part of a carousel of science investigations in Years 5 and 6, generated much enjoyment as well as good learning. Imaginative curriculum opportunities contribute positively to pupils' good personal development. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, write with empathy as they imagine what it must have been like to be a wartime evacuee. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in French and music, both of which contribute to their cultural development.

The most effective lessons move forward at a brisk pace but learning slows in those lessons where teachers' introductions go on for 30 minutes or more. Even though pupils listen intently to their teachers, a few get restless sitting passively on the carpet for this length of time. At these times, support staff are not always fully

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utilised. They are sometimes merely passive observers.

The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is consistently at least satisfactory. It is good in those lessons where work is closely matched to these pupils' individual capabilities. Teachers do not always plan work that is matched to the range of ability in each class, including to stretch the more able. Too often, pupils are all given similar work to do. Lessons routinely start with the teacher setting out the learning intentions, along with success criteria against which pupils are expected to gauge their learning. Mostly, however, these success criteria are the same for the whole class, regardless of the different levels which pupils have attained.

There are examples of good marking that gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work, but this is not uniform across the school. Some marking merely offers encouragement. Although teachers often pose questions when they mark pupils' work, there is not a routine expectation that pupils will respond to them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are good. This is a view endorsed strongly by parents and carers, and by the pupils themselves. They confirm, for example, that bullying is rare and express confidence that, if it arises, it will be dealt with quickly and effectively by the headteacher and staff. Pupils have a good appreciation of how to keep safe. This was very evident from the discussion of pupils in Years 1 and 2 on, for example, the dangers posed by parked cars. Pupils are aware of the risks when using the internet, and of cyber-bullying, and they know how best to minimise such hazards.

Pupils respond positively to the school's well-established systems for promoting good behaviour. Pupils get on well together, and boys and girls cooperate sensibly when asked to work in pairs and small groups. They behave consistently well in lessons and around the school, and they are enthusiastic learners.

Although attendance rates declined after the last inspection and were below average in 2011, they are substantially better this year: attendance rates for the first two terms of this year were fully 3% higher than over the same period last year. This means that attendance is back on track to be in line with the national average. The improvement is due to improved monitoring and speedier contact with parents and carers. Pupils also appreciate the opportunities they have to win the new attendance certificates.

Leadership and management

Although standards fell back after the last inspection, the headteacher and staff team have maintained the full confidence of parents and carers, who express overwhelmingly positive views on every aspect of the school. Their faith has been justified by the turnaround this year, which also shows the school's satisfactory capacity for improvement. The effectiveness of performance management and staff

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training is evident in the improved teaching this year that has led to pupils making faster progress, particularly in upper Key Stage 2. As a result, attainment is returning to the above average levels which should be expected of pupils, given their prior attainment and enthusiasm. Attendance is also markedly better.

Although it has reassured parents and carers when the headteacher has taken on the teaching when staff absences have occurred, this has inevitably been at the expense of time for management. Other staff with subject and leadership roles also have limited time allotted for carrying out their responsibilities, especially the monitoring and support of teaching and learning. Where leaders have observed lessons, they have often had an overly positive picture of these lessons' effectiveness. This is because observations have tended to home in on the features of teaching rather than on the extent to which all the pupils are learning and making progress.

The curriculum is made interesting and fun, as the pupils themselves confirm. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy an especially stimulating range of different activities. In Key Stages 1 and 2, a strength of the curriculum is that pupils are mostly encouraged to record work in their own way rather than using worksheets. A weakness is that, too often, pupils of widely different abilities are given the same work to do, with similar expected outcomes. Nevertheless, the curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils in Years 3 and 4, for example, took a keen interest in identifying similarities between Islam and Christianity; more readily spotting those than the differences. Activities such as this contribute to the friendly attitudes across the school, where pupils readily challenge any discrimination. Although there has been a wide gender gap in pupils' performance in some year groups, inspection evidence confirms that this is a function of the small numbers in each year group and does not represent any inequality of opportunity.

The governing body is supportive of the school, and it has ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet regulatory requirements. It approves the development plan that sets the school's strategic direction and annual plans for improvement. This has not been as effective as it should be as a tool for managing the school's performance, however, because the targets in the plan lack rigour. Not enough of the targets are precise and measurable. This limits the usefulness of the development plan as a tool for gauging the school's success.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



10 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bayford Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Hertford, SG13 8PX

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I would like to express a particular thanks to those of you who shared your views with me through the questionnaire, those who spoke to me about behaviour and about your work, and those who read to me.

Bayford is providing you with a satisfactory education and there are signs from this year's work that attainment is beginning to rise again following a period of two years or so when it has been only average. Your behaviour is good and you listen well in lessons and show you are keen to learn. In fact, your behaviour and attitudes are so good that it shows you ought to be doing even better in lessons and over your time at the school. For that reason, I have asked that more of the teaching moves from satisfactory to good, and at accelerating your progress in lessons. You can help by telling your teachers whenever you find the work you are given is too easy or too hard. You can also help by ensuring that you do not miss school unnecessarily. Attendance has been below that of other schools in the past, but it is much improved this year. It is important that you do not miss school, or else you will fall behind in your learning.

School leaders, the governing body and the staff team have been working hard together to improve the school. Though there have been setbacks since the last time the school was inspected, things are certainly improving this year. I have suggested some ways of further improving the effectiveness of management arrangements over the year ahead.

My thanks, again, for helping me on this inspection, and my very best wishes to all of you for the future, both at this school and, for those of you in your last term here, for your new start next year at your secondary schools.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector

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