

# Barkway VA Church of England First School

High Street, Barkway, Royston, SG8 8EF

**Inspection dates** 13–14 March 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils, staff and parents are proud of their school. They greatly value the school's warm and caring family atmosphere.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception class. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 4, their attainment in English and mathematics is above that typically expected for their age.
- Teaching is good. Every pupil's progress is closely tracked so that anyone falling behind is spotted quickly and support is given.
- Pupils experience a wide range of stimulating activities and, as a result, have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils feel safe, behave well and work hard in lessons. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted by all staff.
- The school provides good quality special activities to help pupils who are behind in their learning to catch up. Teaching assistants and other adults work closely with the teachers to ensure activities are tailor made. Consequently, these pupils make the same good progress as their peers.
- The headteacher and governing body provide a clear direction for the development of the school and improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The school is well placed to build on this improvement.
- Since her appointment, the headteacher has made considerable improvements to the school including raising expectations of staff and improving the punctuality and attendance of pupils.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is sometimes not hard enough for the most-able pupils.
- Subject leaders are at an early stage in the development of their roles in raising attainment and improving the quality of teaching.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons or parts of lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed pupils in lessons, at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and different groups of people involved in the school. These included pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and members of the teaching staff. The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative from the local authority.
- During the inspection, the inspectors took into account the 13 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. The nine responses to the questionnaires completed by staff during the inspection were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school's checks on the performance of pupils and teachers, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies.

## Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Barkway is a much smaller than average-sized first school.
- There are two classes. Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children are taught as one class, Years 2, 3 and 4 as another.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. There are none in some year groups.
- Almost all of the pupils are White British and speak English as a first language.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. There are none in some year groups. The pupil premium is additional government funding, in this school provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school works in collaboration with nearby Barley First School, and shares the same executive headteacher. The two schools have separate governing bodies which have agreed to work in partnership together.
- Barkway Pre-school shares the school site. This provision was not inspected as part of this inspection.

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

- Ensure that expectations are consistently high and that work is sufficiently demanding, so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable, especially the most able.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they are able to make a more effective contribution to raising standards and moving the quality of teaching to outstanding.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Activities in both Nursery and Reception are highly motivating for children's learning and achievement. Consequently, they make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. By the time they enter Year 1, most reach a good level of development across all areas of learning, although the proportion varies from year-to-year due to the very small number of children involved.
- Small and fluctuating numbers in each year group mean that published data need to be interpreted with caution because one pupil can represent a high percentage of the total. The school's system for checking how well pupils are doing shows that they make good progress from their individual starting points and achieve well throughout the school. This is confirmed by evidence from lesson observations and work in pupils' books. As a result, by the time they leave the school in Year 4, they reach standards that are above those typical for their age in all subjects.
- The school's drive to raise pupils' phonic knowledge (the sounds letters make) resulted in an increased proportion of pupils reaching the average level in the 2013 Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils make good progress in developing early reading skills and in their enjoyment of books. Attainment in reading continues to rise so that, by Year 4, the large majority of pupils reach Level 4 two years ahead of the standards usually found at this age. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 read widely for enjoyment and also very effectively to obtain information in a range of subjects.
- Teachers make sure that pupils' writing skills are secure and that they have opportunities to write in a variety of styles in different subjects. By Year 4, pupils write well in a range of different formats, such as character sketches, stories or biographies. There is a good range of mathematical experiences evident in pupils' books, demonstrating that they make good progress in mathematics. Teaching promotes pupils' basic calculation skills and teachers ensure that pupils can apply these skills effectively.
- The school keeps a very close watch on the progress pupils are making, with regular checks to ensure that no-one is falling behind. All pupils, and particularly those at risk of underachievement, have an equal opportunity to perform as well as they can, as the school reacts quickly to any slowing of pupils' progress.
- While pupils make good progress, the most able pupils are not always challenged to do their very best. This is because some teachers do not always set work that really challenges their thinking. Lesson observations, pupils' work in books and the school's records confirm this is the case. This is why achievement is good and not outstanding.
- Disabled pupils and those pupils who need extra help are fully included in all learning activities. This reflects the school's commitment to equal opportunities. As a result, they make good progress and achieve well.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding is very low and, in some age groups, for example, Year 4 in 2013, there were no such pupils. However, there is nothing to suggest that there are any gaps between the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other pupils.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Work in pupils' books and the school's records of the checks made on teaching indicate that teaching is typically good and improving. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they ensure that lessons are planned to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils' ages and abilities. This ensures that pupils learn well over time.
- There are positive relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils and, as a result, pupils want to do well and are prepared to work hard. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.
- Staff quickly build warm relationships with the Nursery and Reception children. A strong focus on personal development means that children became increasingly confident in getting along with one another and with adults. Staff take every opportunity to engage children in conversations and extend their learning.
- At the start of lessons, teachers tell pupils what learning is intended so all work to the same end, albeit at different levels, throughout the lesson. Teachers use various techniques to make the learning successful for all pupils and a range of well-chosen resources invariably supports learning very well. For example, in a Year 1 group, pupils were exploring their favourite stories. They were able to draw on a wide range of books and resources throughout the lesson. At the end of the lesson they talked with confidence about the characters and were able to express opinions about what it was they particularly liked.
- Where learning is strongest, staff frequently check pupils' understanding during the lesson. This was observed in a writing lesson when pupils were observed writing their version of a traditional story using good punctuation and imaginative writing. They persevered well and made rapid progress by the end of the lesson.
- Staff help pupils to review and improve their work throughout lessons and the marking of pupils' work is helping pupils to learn well. Increasingly, teachers' very helpful guidance is supplemented by pupils learning how to mark and evaluate their own work and that of others.
- Teaching assistants are well informed and work in close partnership with teachers. They provide sensitive and helpful advice and support for pupils who need extra help or are at risk of not doing as well as they could. Support staff take the initiative during lessons and are quick to spot where pupils need extra help. They also provide sensitive and tailored support outside the classroom.
- While teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, they do not always ensure that the work they set is challenging enough to enable pupils to make the best possible progress. Although they prepare work and learning opportunities for pupils of different abilities, this is not always done effectively enough, particularly to challenge and extend the learning of the most-able pupils.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour is good in and around the school and this has a positive effect on their good achievement. The inspector saw exemplary behaviour during a whole-school assembly, which celebrated pupils' achievement and attendance.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are safe and secure and settle quickly because of

the good quality care provided.

- The school is a welcoming and friendly place and pupils, parents and carers say how much they appreciate its family atmosphere. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy coming. Punctuality and attendance have improved and are now average.
- Pupils behave well when they are working with teachers, teaching assistants or other adults. They are polite and well mannered, and show genuine concern and care for one another. They generally play very happily together at break and lunch times and they are willing to contribute ideas and respect their classmates' views.
- Behaviour and safety are not yet outstanding because some pupils lose concentration, on occasion, and need to be reminded to pay attention. However, pupils told the inspector that children all get on well together and that their learning in lessons is never hampered by poor behaviour.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for in school and the school helps them to understand how they can be responsible for being healthy and staying safe in and out of school. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that their children are happy at school and feel safe. Almost all think children are well looked after and behave well.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school, but they are confident that, should any incidents occur, staff would deal with them promptly and fairly. They have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms, including name calling, physical and cyber bullying. They understand the school's behaviour policy well. Pupils value the wide range of responsibilities they have, as play leaders and members of the pupil councils.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and its future development. This is shared by staff, governors and parents and shown by the very strong support for the school in the parent and staff questionnaires. Staff are increasingly benefiting from the close collaboration with Barley First School; for example, from joint training.
- Leaders set high expectations for the performance of staff and keep a watchful eye on pupils' progress. Extensive monitoring and analysis enable the school to devise well-focused plans. As a result, the quality of teaching is at least good and leaders are taking effective steps to drive up the quality of teaching still further.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because regular, accurate assessments are made of what children know and can do, and activities which steadily build skills and knowledge are carefully planned.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Information on pupils' progress is taken into account when judging how well teachers are doing, and is considered when making decisions about their pay.
- The school knows its pupils very well as individuals. There are effective systems to check the progress that each pupil is making, and any underachievement is addressed by providing extra help or support if it is needed. This ensures that all pupils in the school achieve well and shows the school's commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils.

- The well-planned curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, trips and visits including sport, drama, music and cultural activities. Together with its Christian values and close links with the local church, these contribute to pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The primary school sport funding has increased pupils' participation in physical education and sport and is having a positive impact on pupils' physical well-being and healthy lifestyles. The recently purchased classroom bus is enabling the effective development of science and technology between the two schools.
  
- While staff in this small school readily and effectively take on responsibilities, some subject leaders do not have a detailed enough knowledge of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in all classes and subjects. This is what prevents leadership and management from being outstanding.
  
- The local authority supports the school effectively and has every confidence in the school leadership's ability to drive further improvement.
  
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors know the school well because they are regular visitors. They check the information available on pupils' progress and attainment through raising questions at governors' meetings. Governors know how pupil-premium funding is spent and they also check the spending of the primary school sport funding and the impact of both these funds on pupils' learning. They set challenging targets as part of the headteacher's appraisal and make sure that pupil performance is considered when making decisions about the pay of teachers and teaching assistants. Governors ensure that the school's finances are well managed and are clear that they meet all statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding. Governors participate in regular training and keep their effectiveness under review.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117422
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	430763

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	25
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jo Cockerton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Margaret Davies-McKeon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2012
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