

Benington Church of England Primary School

Walkern Road, Benington, SG2 7LP

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Benington has a warm, family atmosphere. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued. They work and play together harmoniously.
- Children get off to a good start in their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. All groups of pupils make good progress as they move up through the school. They develop confidence and learn to speak fluently and listen to others attentively.
- The headteacher continually strives for improvement in all areas of the school's work. She has high expectation of pupils and teachers.
- Teachers are energetic and enthusiastic. They plan activities carefully to interest and engage pupils.
- Pupils are proud of their school and behave well. They say they like learning and their teachers make work fun.
- The variety of subjects on offer engages pupils well and the school's focus on reading ensures pupils read widely. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and contributes to the school's positive atmosphere for learning.
- Governors support the school very well. They ensure finances are used to the best advantage of pupils and that school leaders are held accountable for their actions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always give clear enough advice to pupils to help them improve their work.
- The pace of learning for some pupils is sometimes too slow when they are not interested enough in the activity and lose concentration or they find it too easy.
- Some pupils make slower progress in writing than they could. They do not have enough opportunities to write in different styles.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons, all of which were observed jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. He also looked at pupils' written work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher and other school leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke formally to a group of pupils, and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. He also listened to pupils reading, talked to them about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- Several of the school's documents were examined. These included: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its development plan; the school's information about pupils' progress, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector took account of 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and the views expressed by parents as they arrived to drop off their children. He analysed 15 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Benington is smaller than an average-sized primary school. There are five classes: one class in each year group from Reception to Year 2, and two mixed-age classes for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and another for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Almost all pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is similar to the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Building repair work was in progress during the inspection and no pupils attended the school on the second inspection day because of in-service training for staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - give clear written advice to pupils on the next steps they should follow to improve in all subjects
 - plan activities that will fully involve all pupils
 - make sure all pupils move on to harder work in a timely manner.
- Improve pupils' progress in writing by providing them with more opportunities to write in different styles and for different purposes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Broadly, children start school in Reception with skills and understanding that are typical for their age. Children quickly learn how to get along with others and become self-confident in the caring and supportive environment. They learn to speak and listen well and have good opportunities for early writing and developing their understanding of numbers. Children persevere with activities and make good progress in all areas.
- Standards at the end of each key stage are generally above average, reflecting good progress across the school. Results are seldom statistically significantly above average because of the low numbers in each year-group. Differences from year to year are often due the different abilities of each group, and different proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- An above-average number of children start Key Stage 1 with a good level of development and pupils continue to make good progress. At the end of Year 2 in 2013, pupils did particularly well in writing.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 in all subjects. In 2013, the progress of Year 6 pupils in writing lagged behind that in reading and mathematics. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write for different purposes, particularly in non-fiction styles.
- Reading is promoted well. Pupils are expected to read often and widely, and generally do so. 'Golden Reading' encourages fluent readers to try more challenging texts and pupils read regularly during the school day. Younger readers read to adults in school and their reading records show they read often to parents at home. Book corners in each classroom and a vibrant library motivate pupils to read more.
- Pupils' creative writing is good. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 made good progress in writing in the role of characters from a story they were reading. Pupils have many opportunities to write stories and their use of the correct grammar, punctuation and spelling improves well as they get older. They have good vocabularies, speak confidently and listen attentively.
- The school ensures disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively to make good progress. Their progress is followed closely and well-trained teaching assistants and, where appropriate, external specialists provide well targeted extra support.
- Pupils who benefit from the pupil premium are well supported, for example through counselling, one-to-one teaching and subsidies for trips and clubs. Eligible pupils are generally making more rapid progress than others, but there are so few in each year that no meaningful comparison can be made about the attainment gap each year between them and their peers.
- The most-able pupils are suitably stretched. For example, they have more challenging sessions in English and, at a local secondary school, in mathematics. These pupils are making good progress. They have been successful in local mathematics challenges, and school information shows that this year more Year 6 pupils are on track to reach level 6, the highest standard in mathematics for their age.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers explain clearly what they expect pupils to learn and the steps that should be followed. Teachers often use skilful questioning to help pupils to express their ideas fully and to extend their understanding. Pupils say they will often get help from their classmates if they are ever stuck and their teachers will readily help anyway.
- The Reception class is welcoming and a bright and exciting area that stimulates children's imagination well. Best use is made of an awkward outside space, which has a strong focus on planting and growing. Adults regularly initiate conversations with children and make them think hard about what they are doing. Children's progress in all areas of learning is followed closely and their achievements recorded well.
- Phonics (the sounds letters represent in words) is taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants model pronunciation accurately and ensure pupils do the same. In the 2013 phonics screening check, pupils did much better than the national average.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and holds pupils' interest. Pupils catch on to the sense of importance in their learning. Teachers circulate around groups and individuals skilfully to discuss their thinking and successfully encourage further efforts. Teaching assistants are generally deployed well. They know what needs to be done to help identified pupils make rapid progress.
- Teachers usually plan activities that build on pupils' prior learning and engage them well. For example, pupils in Year 1 worked with concentration when they were investigating the effect of the same force on the movement of different objects. They developed the idea of a fair test and their skills in measuring well.
- Sometimes, a few pupils are allowed to continue with exercises they have mastered when teachers do not move them onto harder tasks. Also, in some group activities, the most-able pupils do most of the work and a few other pupils, finding the task too hard, are not fully engaged. At such times, some pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Pupils understand the school's marking system. Teachers mark their written work regularly and often in detail. Comments are given explaining what pupils have done well, but clear advice on how to improve is sometimes not given. In some cases, pupils repeat mistakes from earlier exercises.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and act responsibly when moving around the school or in lessons. At play times, 'friendship groups' ensure everyone has someone to play with or talk to. For example, during morning break a Year 6 pupil led a playground game for Year 2 pupils.
- Pupils say they look forward to coming to school. They get on well with each other and like their teachers. Parents speak highly of the care and support their children receive and how well they settle in.
- Teachers model clearly the sort of behaviour they expect and praise pupils' good behaviour regularly. Consequently, pupils respond quickly to instructions and little learning time is lost in correcting misbehaviour. Counselling and work in small groups give good support to a few identified pupils, who need this help, in managing their behaviour.

- Pupils want to learn. They usually listen carefully and settle to work quickly. They cooperate well with one another and share ideas readily. Occasionally, if work is too difficult or too easy, a few pupils lose concentration and do not work as hard as they could.
- Pupils are proud to take on extra responsibilities, such as school council representative or book monitor. Some Year 6 pupils act as peer mediators and sort out any minor disagreements between classmates.
- The school records the relatively few incidents of misbehaviour and the actions taken. Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They say bullying is rare and they are confident that teachers sort out any instances quickly. Governors, staff, parents and pupils themselves agree that behaviour at school is good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Play times are well supervised and staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Visitors are vetted by school personnel. Pupils say they feel safe everywhere in school and there is always an adult they can talk to if they are ever upset.
- Pupils have learned how to stay healthy and keep themselves safe. They know about balanced diets and remember the key points about such things as road and e-safety from lessons and from visitors, such as the police. They know that regular exercise is important and say that pupils are more active now. A Year 2 pupil proudly explained the route she took to school each morning as part of the 'walking bus.'
- Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Good attendance is recognised and rewarded. Attendance has improved. Current attendance figures are around the national average.

The leadership and management are good

- Benington operates smoothly on a daily basis. All members of the school community cooperate well to maintain the school's good order and caring, purposeful atmosphere.
- The head teacher, with good support from other school leaders, has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. The work of teachers and teaching assistants is regularly checked to ensure teaching is always at least good and that pupils are making good progress. Teachers are expected to meet challenging targets related to the progress that pupils make. Good training opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to improve their own teaching skills are made available.
- Subject leaders are effectively encouraged to develop their own leadership and management skills. For example, they work with senior leaders to check on the quality of teaching in their subject areas and lead training sessions to improve other teachers' subject skills, in Benington and also other local schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed and organised.
- Senior leaders make good use of effective support from the local authority to check the accuracy of their own judgements and meet identified training needs. They know the school's strengths and areas for development well. Plans for development are well focused to bring about further improvement.
- The school regularly checks how well pupils are doing in each subject to make sure all are making good progress. Teachers work together with a group of other schools to ensure

judgements about standards of pupils' work are accurate. Well-targeted and effective extra support is planned for any pupils showing signs of falling behind.

- The school provides a good variety of subjects with a suitable focus on literacy and numeracy. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is promoted well by the exciting activities planned for different topics. For example, pupils dress up as fictional characters, and visit museums or historical sites. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed a Greek feast as part of their topic on Greece. Parents are encouraged to add to pupils' learning through holiday homework, with suggestions for family visits or activities for different topics. Further enrichment comes from a good range of clubs, including gardening and cooking, and competitions, such as for debating or in mathematics.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils learn the need for high moral standards and tolerance and respect for others through lessons and assemblies. They learn about different faiths, including by visiting different places of worship. They have links with an African school and raise funds to support a pupil's education there.
- Parents have good opportunities to influence the way the school runs through the parent council. Regular celebration assemblies are available for parents to see and hear about their children's achievements. Parents say teachers are approachable and informative and the school provides workshops and information events to explain the work pupils are doing.
- The primary schools sports funding is used well to increase pupils' participation in physical activity. For example, specialists in gymnastics are being used to improve teachers' expertise in coaching and pupils' gymnastics skills. A sports and an adventure club introduce pupils to new sports and games. More pupils now take part in regular physical activity with the consequent benefit to their health.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has relevant skills and experience and augments these well with regular training updates from the local authority. Governors know how to interpret data about pupils' performance. They are well informed about the impact of the school's work through regular reports from the headteacher and their own well-planned visits.
 - Governors offer strong support to the school but hold the leaders accountable for their actions. Together with the local authority, they set challenging targets for the headteacher, including ones related to pupils' achievements.
 - Governors manage the school's budget prudently and ensure the school's small budget is used wisely. They have ensured that pupil premium funding and extra money for sports are spent sensibly and check that their impact is positive. All safeguarding arrangements are properly overseen and fully in place.

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

Unique reference number	117389
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	444328

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	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Cobb
Headteacher	Jenny Munns
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2008
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