

Bramfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Bridge Street, Bramfield, Halesworth, IP19 9HZ

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Standards have declined to low levels as shown in Key Stage 2 summer test results in 2013 and 2014.
- Pupils have not been sufficiently challenged. Pupils with the most potential have made the least progress.
- Achievement remains too low. Weaknesses in mathematics persist in some year groups.
- The school's lesson observation system pays too much attention to teacher activities rather than pupils' learning. This makes it harder for senior leaders to know if lessons are pitched at a high enough level.
- Governors have been too reliant on information presented to them. They have not been confident enough in their knowledge of performance data to question or challenge the executive headteacher on matters of school performance, or teaching and learning.
- Leaders have not been sufficiently thorough or systematic in checking the quality of teaching, marking, lesson planning, written work and the work of teaching assistants. Inconsistencies have therefore not been addressed.

The school has the following strengths

- Since September 2014, standards have started to rise.
- Good provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that the children learn well and make good progress.
- The school has the leadership capacity to make necessary improvements. The school has effective middle leaders, and draws on the strengths of other schools in the partnership.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons on 11 occasions. In addition, one lesson observation was carried out jointly with a middle leader.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work, listened to reading, and met with a group of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, middle leaders, including the coordinator for special educational needs, and head of school site.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority, who is also the school's challenge partner.
- Many documents were scrutinised. These included: current assessment data, assessment from the last academic year for those year groups that did not undertake national tests, and data from the early years provision. In addition, school improvement plans, governors' records of meetings, and records of lesson observations were scrutinised. Safeguarding documents were carefully scrutinised.
- Inspectors took note of 19 completed staff questionnaires, and 36 responses on the online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Ian Seath, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Cheryl Thompson

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is in the process of forming a collaborative soft federation with three other nearby primary schools. This process is nearing completion. Over the last 15 months, the executive headteacher has been working across all four schools.
- The headteacher has, in addition to her school role, taken on the role of executive headteacher with a lead responsibility for the partnership. This often takes her away from the school. In her absence, a head of school site looks after the day-to-day operation of the school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage with English as their first language.
- In 2014 the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals was well below average. The number of pupils in each year group is low. It is therefore not possible to compare accurately the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are looked after, with national averages. In some year groups there are none.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is very variable between year groups. At the time of the 2013-14 national tests it was higher than average and this remains the case.
- The school offers full-time early years provision.
- All classes contain mixed-year groups.
- The school currently has a few pupils educated off-site at different institutions.
- In 2014, the school failed to meet the government's current floor standards. These define the minimum levels of attainment and progress that pupils should achieve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and, hence, achievement by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, including those in mixed year-groups, are taught at a level that constantly challenges them
 - paying particular attention to the challenge given to the most able
 - improving planning, marking and written work so that standards are consistently high
 - tackling the teaching and learning of mathematics in those year groups and areas where progress in this subject is weaker
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are deployed effectively
 - devise a lesson observation system that monitors rigorously the quality of pupils' learning, and whether groups of pupils are being sufficiently stretched.
- Improve leadership by:
 - ensuring that self-evaluations are rigorously self-critical and lead to purposeful, clear action plans the outcomes of which are closely monitored
 - making sure that governors are regularly supplied with clear summaries of the school's performance, including that of groups, and that these summaries consistently reference this performance to national expectations
 - ensuring that the coordinator for special educational needs has appropriate resources to develop materials for the delivery of mathematics to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Improve governance by:
 - ensuring that governors are urgently trained in the analysis of school performance data, and that they

- understand which aspects of these data are most important for their analysis of school performance
- setting challenging school performance targets and monitoring progress towards them rigorously and frequently
- ensuring that these targets and timescales are recorded in such a way that they can be easily checked, and that governors hold the school and senior leaders to account if they are not met.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because standards have been allowed to decline, and the remedial actions taken since the start of the academic year have not secured high quality provision and good achievement.
- The school's over-generous self-evaluation has hampered improvement because issues have not been identified or addressed with sufficient urgency. Judgements are too high. However, the underlying improvement documents and action plans recognise some of the major issues of performance facing the school and steps have been taken to strengthen the quality of teaching and improve the monitoring of pupils' learning.
- Leaders have ensured that pupil premium money received by the school is used appropriately to fund an additional support teacher. The school is able to demonstrate the positive impact of this expenditure on securing better outcomes for targeted pupils.
- The school has a capable tier of middle leaders. Each is contributing well to the improvement of the school. For example, the data manager has good analytical skills. This means that information from assessments is now used much more effectively to monitor performance, set targets, and to check progress. All teachers now have performance data that are largely reliable and up to date.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is the responsibility of the head of school site. She is able to point to examples of teachers whose teaching practice has improved as a result of her intervention, some recently. However, the lesson-observation process places undue emphasis on teachers' actions rather than pupils' learning. Consequently, it is difficult to identify instances when pupils are not sufficiently challenged or are working at too low a level.

The partnership with other schools brings mutual benefits and gives the school capacity to drive improvement. For example, curriculum planning between the schools has led to the successful introduction of the new National Curriculum for all years, and has strengthened provision in mixed-age classes.

- The school's curriculum has significant strengths. It gives a well-balanced education to pupils, with a good mix of subjects and extra-curricular activities. Music is particularly strong, as is sport. Partly, this is due to the pooling of additional sports funding from the other schools in the federation to pay for equipment and teaching expertise. As a result, participation rates in sport have improved and are now high.
- School leaders liaise regularly and often with the two external providers for the education of pupils offsite. Any absences are notified back to the school. Possibilities for reintegration into mainstream provision are constantly reviewed. The school has assured itself of the quality of education that is being provided for these children.
- The school's provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is strong. Values of tolerance, equality of opportunity and care are instilled into pupils from the earliest of ages. Inspectors witnessed instances of inconsiderate behaviour in the very young being corrected and challenged by others. Pupils, especially the older ones, are aware of how the country is governed and know what democracy and freedom of speech is.
- Assemblies often draw on moral and spiritual themes, and cultural education is seen in other aspects of the curriculum. For example educational visits occur often and the school orchestra helps pupils to appreciate music. Religious education gives pupils a good understanding of other faiths and beliefs. Pupils have a strong understanding of British values. Pupils are given opportunities to explore different cultures from their own, for example through links with a village school in Asia.
- Almost all of those parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, indicated that they felt the school was well led and managed. Staff questionnaires indicated a similar level of confidence in the

school and its managers. However, a small number of parents expressed concern about standards.

- The local authority has provided considerable challenge and support since the weak results of 2013-14 were revealed. This has helped the school to set more challenging targets. Together with the executive headteacher, the local authority has also been pivotal in facilitating the development of the collaborative partnership with the other three schools.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are well qualified and hard working. Notes of meetings demonstrate that they are good at asking challenging questions and they have the skills and confidence to hold the school to account. However, the effectiveness of the governing body has been undermined by two factors: firstly the demands of operational, financial and strategic issues involved in setting up new collaborative arrangements; and secondly the unhelpful complexity and detail of performance data presented to them.
- Governors have been unaware of the gravity of the school's decline in standards because they have been over-reliant on information provided by the school, which has not clearly and precisely identified issues. Consequently, they are unable to set and monitor precise targets for improvement.
- Governors know about the school's performance management and have been closely involved in its implementation. They ensure that appropriately challenging achievement targets are set for teachers and that success is linked to progression up pay bands. However, they are less well-informed about the quality of teaching and learning because the school's lesson observation system does not evaluate learning well. Governors manage and monitor the targets that they set for performance of senior leaders.
- Governors have appropriate training on child protection, aspects of governance, and safer recruitment. However, they have not had recent training on the evaluation of school performance data.
- Governors ensure the school meets all safeguarding and child protection requirements well.
- In conversation with inspectors, it is clear that governors know their own training requirements and understand the needs of the school. There is, therefore, no need for an external review of governance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. It is not outstanding because a significant minority of pupils do not take sufficient pride in their written work. On occasions, some work is scruffy and disorganised.
- The school has clear expectations for behaviour which are understood and applied. Inspectors saw no examples of disruptive behaviour in class or around the school or when moving between lessons. In class, pupils are cooperative and helpful, willingly making contributions when asked. Inspectors found them to be always polite and helpful. They are a credit to their school.
- Attendance is above the national average and there have been no exclusions. There is no persistent absence. Punctuality is excellent, both on arrival at school and in lessons. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire Parent view indicated that they agreed with positive statements around behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Governors and staff ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met, and that procedures are updated and clear. Appropriate checks on recruitment are carried out and governors have safer recruitment training.
- The school ensures that those pupils who are most vulnerable are safe and receive very effective care. All parents who responded to Parent view agreed that their children were happy and safe. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Those pupils at Key Stage 2 have a clear understanding of how

to work safely with computers. Those at Key Stage 1 were clear that they should not use a computer without an adult being present. They know the dangers of social media.

- The school's personal, social and health education is strong. For example, the school has special events during e-safety week. Pupils are taught well about the importance of a healthy diet and exercise.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved, but it is not consistently good. Evidence from pupils' work and observations of learning indicate that, too often, pupils are not sufficiently stretched. This means that some pupils, usually the older and more able, do not achieve as well as they should. This has contributed to the underachievement seen in the national test results in 2014.
- Some targets set for pupils are not challenging enough at Key Stage 2. Targets are more challenging at Key Stage 1. However, this situation is beginning to change, as better and more frequent assessment of pupils' progress and attainment takes effect, and is used more effectively to pitch learning at a more suitable level.
- In conjunction with other schools in the federation, a common plan for the mathematics curriculum has been produced and implemented. This successfully combines the necessary elements from new and old curricula so that the needs of all pupils in the Year 5 and Year 6 transition class are met.
- A few of those parents who responded to Parent View expressed some concerns about homework, but inspectors judged the homework set for pupils was generally age appropriate. However, inspectors did agree with the small number of parents who expressed concern about the progress pupils made.
- Inspectors examined written work from all year groups. A mixed picture in the extent to which marking extended learning was noted, with no clear pattern or consistency. Some practice seen was weak, for example, the marking of written work as correct when clear errors remained. Examples were noted in mathematics where rows of ticks indicated that pupils had successfully tackled similar problems, but yet had not moved on to fresh challenges.
- The quality of teaching and support provided by teaching assistants is too variable.
- The school's coordinator for special educational needs works very effectively with those disabled pupils and those with special educational needs or profound learning difficulties. Plans for teaching reading and writing are detailed, and their implementation effective, producing good learning. However, this learning is less effective for mathematics where planning is not as good.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Small cohorts make interpretation of results problematic, but results at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2014 show a trend of underachievement.
- At Key Stage 1, attainment declined significantly to well-below average in 2013, showing some recovery in 2014 but remaining below the national average for this type of school. Overall, pupils entered Key Stage 2 last year a little behind their peers nationally, the weakest subject being mathematics. Attainment for girls was particularly weak. Small numbers mean that trends for other groups cannot be determined in either of the key stages.
- Pupils' results in the national phonics (converting letters and groups of letters to sounds) check were broadly in line with the national average in 2014.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils' performance in 2014 was well below expectations compared to similar schools

nationally. The school failed to meet government floor standards. On average, pupils left the school about six months behind their peers nationally. They were, therefore, not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- The progress of the most able pupils is not good enough. In 2014, pupils with average or above average attainment in Key Stage 1 did not achieve as well as they should at the end of Key Stage 2. Some pupils were one full year behind where they should be. The deficit seen in girls' attainment in Key Stage 1 persisted into Key Stage 2.
- Most significantly, value added data (which indicates how well pupils performed in Year 6 compared to how well they should have performed given their Key Stage 1 test results) placed the school very low indeed. This was a significant decline over the previous year. Too many pupils who achieved average standards of attainment at Key Stage 1 failed to reach expected levels by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Despite this very weak past performance, inspectors did find signs that this situation is changing. Very recent data, together with some for the year groups that were not examined in the 2014 tests, indicate that some groups of pupils are now making progress that is close to that expected. Improvements are most marked in writing in Years 4 and 5, and reading in Year 3.
- Close scrutiny of written work from all year groups confirmed the legacy of underachievement, but also that the situation is changing as assessment, monitoring and teaching improve.

The early years provision

is good

- Senior leaders have ensured that the curriculum in the early years is designed to challenge children effectively. This means they make more rapid progress in early years than they do in other areas of the school.
- Children enter the Reception Class with aptitudes broadly in-line with those expected for their age. Most, including those with special educational needs or who are disabled, make good progress and develop the skills needed to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- They learn quickly because of good teaching and are able to independently access the necessary resources and equipment in a well-organised classroom.
- The transition into Early Years is supported by close involvement with the on-site pre-school and the Year 1 children in the class, who gain confidence by encouraging and guiding their younger peers.
- The class teacher makes good use of opportunities to develop children's language and mathematical skills and provides them with a broad range of stimulating activities that support all areas of the curriculum. Children's Understanding of the world is good and was demonstrated by children exploring ice and recognising that melting is quicker if the ice is placed on a radiator; they accessed timers and endeavoured to determine which sample of ice would melt more quickly.
- Teaching is well planned and staff are allocated strategically to record children's progress; asking pertinent questions to promote learning further. Learning journals indicate that careful notes are taken of all aspects of children's learning and these feed into accurate assessments and 'next steps.'
- Children are happy, content and safe.

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	124722
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	456054

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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorah Swarts
Headteacher	Cathryn Benefer
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
Telephone number	01986 784205
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