

# Inspection of a good school: Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Church End, Barley, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 8JW

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Inspection dates:

15 January 2020

## **Outcome**

Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School continues to be a good school. However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The quality of education pupils receive is not good enough in all subject areas, including English and mathematics. Leaders' expectations for what pupils can achieve are not ambitious enough. Too often, pupils are not developing their skills and/or deepening their knowledge and understanding. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Despite weaknesses in the curriculum, Barley is well known for the high quality of pupils' singing and playing of musical instruments. All pupils have the opportunity to perform, for example at the annual summer concert. This successfully supports pupils' personal development.

Pupils know the school's behaviour system well. They respond to this positively in and around school. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They attend school well. Pupils are friendly, and get on and work together well. A few pupils are unclear about the difference between bullying and pupils being occasionally unkind to one another. However, pupils are confident that adults take care of them. Pupils know they can talk to any member of staff if they are worried about anything.

Parents and carers are positive about the school. They value the 'happy community' created and believe staff 'go above and beyond' for their children.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have faced a number of unforeseen difficulties and challenges since the previous inspection. This has been added to by weaker leadership and governance over time. Leaders have not focused sufficiently on maintaining a good quality of education. Leaders,

including governors, do not check the quality of education carefully enough or plan and prioritise improvement work well enough.

Leaders and teachers have not thought carefully enough about what they want pupils to know, do and understand within the curriculum. Leaders have not considered the order in which pupils will learn things to enable them to build on previous learning. Over time, in subjects such as art, history and geography, pupils have too many 'one-off' lessons which do not tie in with previous lessons. This approach does not help pupils to understand the subjects fully.

Leaders have successfully promoted reading. Pupils enjoy reading both at home and at school. Most pupils read very well. In the cases where pupils require help, effective support is given for pupils to become better readers. The development of phonics teaching has been a recent priority for the school. Teachers have received training. They are using this effectively in their teaching. While phonics is better taught, teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of how reading is taught beyond the teaching of phonics are less effective.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the school. They receive extra support. However, as with all pupils, the quality of the curriculum does not ensure that pupils with SEND achieve as well as they are able to.

While pupils enjoy their lessons, they also feel that, too often, the work is too easy. Pupils are complimentary about the experiences they receive beyond those in the classroom. For example, pupils keenly talk about the visits they go on and their work in the local community. Pupils are positive about the extra-curricular opportunities they have, for example learning to play a musical instrument. This is invaluable. However, because leaders have not paid enough close attention to the planning of the curriculum, pupils do not acquire the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve as well as they should in all subject areas.

Leaders, including governors, do not have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. Leaders make the most of the federation with a partner school. The staff team works well together. Staff work hard. They all agree that leaders are considerate of their well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture where the safety and welfare of children are given a high priority. They have secure processes in place to ensure that the information they receive is acted upon quickly. Staff are well trained and know how and when to report any concerns about pupils' welfare. Concerns are dealt with appropriately.

Governors carry out their legal duties well regarding safeguarding pupils. The safeguarding governor visits the school often to check the quality of systems in place, for example the checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

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

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not made the curriculum a high priority in their work. The curriculum is underdeveloped. Pupils are not developing a deep enough understanding of the subjects that they are being taught. The standards they go on to achieve by the end of Year 4 are lower than they are capable of. Leaders need to develop a well-sequenced and well-thought-out curriculum across all subjects, including English and mathematics. Staff need to have good subject knowledge so that they can teach the full curriculum effectively. This includes the teaching of reading beyond phonics.
- Strategic leadership, including governance, has not been sharp enough. Leaders have not been accurate in evaluating the strengths and areas for development within the school. Leaders at all levels need to plan and evaluate carefully where the school needs to improve, and prioritise actions to bring about rapid improvements. Senior leaders, including governors, need to be precise and rigorous in their oversight of how effective the quality of education is for the pupils in their school.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 7–8 February 2011.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117386
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110301
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	32
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ruth Pyke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sharon Brown (federation executive headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.barley.herts.sch.uk">www.barley.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 March 2016

## Information about this school

- Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School is much smaller than the average-sized school.
- In September 2017, after the previous inspection, the school became an equal part of a federation with Barkway CofE Voluntary Controlled First School. The federation headteacher and the governing body lead both schools. Each school is registered separately with the Department for Education. Each school is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- The federation headteacher has been in post since the federation was formed. The headteacher is a different headteacher for Barley than in the previous inspection.
- Pupils from both federation schools are taught together in single year groups. Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils are taught on the Barkway school site. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 are taught on the Barley school site. Only pupils on the Barley school roll were taken account of during this inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- As part of this inspection, we held meetings with the federation executive headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding leader, the assistant headteacher and the school business manager. We also met with the English, mathematics and art leaders and staff to discuss the quality of education and the well-being support they receive from leaders.
- I met with the chair of the governing body, the vice-chair and two other governors, including the safeguarding governor. Additionally, I had a telephone conversation with an external adviser to discuss their work with the school.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. I spoke to the executive headteacher about all other curriculum subjects and we looked at pupils' curriculum books together.
- We visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. I also saw pupils reading to staff and talked to pupils about their reading.
- There were no pupil responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire. However, we spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school to seek their views about the school.
- I scrutinised a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, adviser visit notes and curriculum plans. To inspect safeguarding arrangements, we scrutinised records about safeguarding children and spoke with staff and pupils. I looked at attendance information and checked for off-rolling and gaming as part of the inspection.
- I considered the 17 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 11 responses to Ofsted's free-text system. There were no staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire but we spoke to staff during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Dunmall

Ofsted Inspector

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