



Brill Church of England Combined School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110418
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278429
Inspection dates 27 September 2005 to 28 September 2005
Reporting inspector Alan Frith AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Firs
School category	Voluntary controlled		Brill
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Aylesbury HP18 9RY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01844237710
Number on roll	165	Fax number	01844238831
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Elaine Dickinson
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr Christopher Hirst

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school, serving a rural community, which has a restricted transport service and no library. Most pupils live in or near the village and transfer from the nearby nursery. Very few are eligible for free school meals. The vast majority are from a white British background and their home language is English. The percentage of children with learning difficulties is below the national average, but the proportion with a statement of special need is slightly higher than the national average. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself as good and inspectors agree, adding that it has some very strong features. The head teacher provides a clear sense of direction and this is well supported by governors. Together, they have created a positive atmosphere, in which children feel safe and happy. Teaching, at its best in Years 5 and 6, is good overall and satisfactory in the earlier years. Standards in Year 6 are above average. The school provides good value for money. Pupils take part in many visits and excursions and learn from contact with the community, including with local artists and writers. Links with other schools and agencies also enhance the curriculum. Through pioneering work on renewable energy resources, the school creates memorable opportunities for pupils to learn about economics and the environment, and provides a model for other schools to follow. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the school has the capacity to improve further because the head and deputy monitor and plan well. Assessment has improved and older pupils, in particular, are more involved in their own learning. Progress is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. Progress is good in Years 3 to 6. There are weaknesses in curriculum planning in the Foundation Stage, which affect progress in Years 1 and 2.

What the school should do to improve further

* Improve provision for the Foundation Stage so that learning for the youngest children is better planned.* Continue to improve teaching so that the children's progress in Years 1 and 2 matches that of the older pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress overall, reaching standards which are generally above average at the end of Year 6. Older pupils make faster progress than younger ones owing to the better teaching at this stage. The results of national tests confirm that the achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is better than that of pupils in Years 1 and 2. Progress made by boys and girls is similar throughout the school and there are few variations between pupils of different abilities or from different minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils with learning difficulties make progress which is at least as good as, and often exceeds, that of all other pupils. The school sets and meets challenging targets, and is aware of the areas it needs to improve. The school strongly encourages reading by helping pupils keep records and tracking their use of the school library. They are good readers, but the school has rightly identified writing as an area to develop, especially amongst the more able in Years 5 and 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. The pupils are happy learners and enjoy being part of the school with its wealth of learning activities. Relationships are very good and pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They feel safe and are confident that their views, thoughts and feelings will be heard and acted on. The school council helps them learn about making their own contribution to community life. Pupils can point to several improvements resulting from decisions made collectively in this way. Teachers and learning support assistants provide exceptionally good role models and support pupils very well. Attendance and punctuality are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The Brill School 'Greening' project is an excellent means of raising pupils' social, moral and environmental awareness, as well as enabling them to provide a lead on sustainable development within the community. The school strongly supports spiritual and cultural development through visits and visitors to the school and in their learning and understanding of other faiths and cultures. Pupils are very sure about how to be safe and healthy. They learn to enjoy exercise and sport and are beginning to understand the importance of making healthy eating choices.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall with some, particularly in Years 5 and 6, that is very good. Pupils respond well to a wide variety of different types of learning activity in lessons, including group work, quiet individual reading and active participation in class presentations. Teachers engage pupils' attention firmly by making good use of interactive white boards. Planning is good except in the Foundation Stage, and pupils know what teachers expect them to learn in each lesson. Assessment is thorough. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and have a good knowledge of learners' needs. Teaching successfully promotes independent learning, so the school lives up to its declared mission to, Challenge, motivate, inspire. Two older boys reported that they had decided to build a hut in their garden using bricks made of mud. They had been inspired by school work on the Egyptians, but were proud to say, We are doing it of our own free will. Most of the teaching is carefully matched to levels of ability and pupils say they rarely receive work that is too easy or too difficult. The school involves parents in their children's learning by providing information on each child's progress and inviting them to take part in target setting so they know what is expected. Pupils like using their target books because they help them see what they need to do next. Pupils in Year 6 have a clear idea of how well they are progressing and of what they need to do to meet challenging targets. Younger pupils do not have a clear enough view of what they should aim to achieve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, with a quality, range and depth which meets the needs of all learners, including those with particular gifts, talents, or other special educational needs. Teachers plan well together and are creative in making exciting links between subjects. Inspectors enjoyed hearing pupils sing Victorian music hall songs while they studied that period. Teachers often link history with both art and music. A weather station helps pupils connect concepts of science and geography to their everyday life. They routinely use computers to research ideas and to support their learning in English, mathematics and most other subjects. There are few weaknesses, but connections between areas of learning are not clear to children in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 because of weaknesses in planning. The school extends its curriculum through an outstanding range of enrichment activities and out of school clubs well supported and greatly enjoyed by pupils. Pupils benefit from a rich programme of visits, themed learning weeks and sporting activities. They often receive visitors in their classrooms, some from abroad and others more local. Residential stays include a trip to France and to an activity centre. This wealth of experience, together with their learning in personal, social and health education (PSHE), teaches skills that will benefit their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care, guidance and support for pupils are good and consideration for their safety and well-being is an established part of the school's ethos. The school carefully monitors pupils' academic and personal development, and meets their individual needs successfully. Arrangements for child protection are strong and the school works effectively with the external agencies, from whom it seeks advice when necessary. Health and safety procedures are reviewed regularly. Most pupils are confident in expressing their opinions and say that they feel happy, secure and well cared for. They trust and have confidence in the adults who teach and care for them. In science, PSHE and physical education lessons the pupils are taught how to take care of themselves and to make healthy and safe choices. A large majority of parents support and value the school. They feel it gives their children access to an engaging and appropriate education and plays a central role in the community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The governors and head teacher provide good leadership and a clear vision for the school. By leading and managing the staff with enthusiasm, commitment and skill, the head has ensured that a sense of team work is evident at all levels within the school. This generates a very positive atmosphere, providing an environment in which pupils want to do well. Management is good and the school evaluates its own performance and plans for improvement well. Staff are pleased with the information they receive

on the quality of their work and support the drive to improve achievement further. The majority of parents feel involved in their children's education. Governors are fully involved in the school's work and offer both challenge and support to the school. They acquire good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses through personal visits, as well as good information provided by the head. They contribute in other ways, including help with after school clubs and sports, classroom support and in-service training activities with staff. The head and deputy respond well to challenges and have started work on developing the Foundation Stage. They have been active and successful in acquiring additional funding for special projects. The links they have established with other organisations, including another primary school in a different and contrasting urban area, are very beneficial.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us warmly during the inspection. Our visit confirmed the governors' view that yours is a good school, and we also saw some excellent features. We learned a lot from talking to you and are pleased that you like your school so much. You are right to do so.

Teaching is good, with some very good teaching in the classes for older pupils, and you make good progress by the time you move on to secondary education. All the adults in school work very well as a team and the head teacher leads with skill and enthusiasm. He uses resources efficiently so the school makes the most of its money. The school provides an excellent range of out of school activities and sports, which you enjoy. Many local people, including parents and governors, help with these.

We identified two things which could be better. Lessons for the youngest pupils are not planned well enough, and the school should improve this. We also think that children in Years 1 and 2 are doing quite well, but could learn even more quickly if more lessons were as good as some that we saw elsewhere in the school. One of the strongest features is the work you all do to promote the use of renewable energy. We were highly impressed by your new wind turbine and by the plans you are making to provide sustainable sources of power for the new classrooms. We send you our best wishes for continued success.