



Bemerton St John's Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126434
LEA Wiltshire
Inspection number 282112
Inspection dates 22 November 2005 to 22 November 2005
Reporting inspector Patricia Davies RISP

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Lower Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Bemerton
Age range of pupils	5 to 11		Salisbury, Wiltshire SP2 9NW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01722 322848
Number on roll	175	Fax number	01722 502992
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Dennis Twomey
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Cherie Taylor

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Bemerton St John is a small village school. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is average. When children join the Reception class, their attainment is generally similar to that of children of a similar age. The school has changed its status from a First school to a Primary in the last two years. There has also been a substantial building programme. Many teachers are new, including the headteacher and some other senior staff.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bemerton St John provides a satisfactory level of education and gives sound value for money. Its own view of its effectiveness is accurate in relation to the pupils' achievement, but is more generous than inspection evidence in some other aspects of its work. Pupils reach average standards and make satisfactory progress. Teaching is sound, but teachers' expectations are not always high enough. The quality of work in the Reception class is adequate, and children achieve satisfactorily. Behaviour is good, and pupils are cared for well. The broad curriculum is enriched by after-school clubs and additional activities.

Under the school's determined new leadership, the momentum for improvement is gathering pace. Much has been done to help the school examine and monitor its performance. This work has focused particularly on setting targets for improving pupils' achievement. These targets are now more challenging, but not yet challenging enough. A minority of parents still feel some anxiety about the many changes that are taking place. Opportunities to communicate with parents have been extended, but these have not been enough to allay their concerns. Senior staff and governors know where key priorities lie and demonstrate in recent improvements that they can move the school on. However, governors are not sufficiently involved in tracking the school's performance. The school has made a sound transition to its new status.

What the school should do to improve further

- make targets more challenging so that teachers have higher expectations of pupils to accelerate pupils' academic progress
- develop further the initiatives for consulting and communicating with parents so that they are kept fully informed of new developments and of areas where the school is making headway
- develop the monitoring role of the governing body so that it knows the school well and can play an active part in guiding its future.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and is improving under the new initiatives taking place in the school. Inspection evidence found no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, and those with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. Children in the Reception class make sound progress and their standards are broadly average when they enter Year 1. Standards in other year groups are also average. Pupils from Years 1 to 5 make satisfactory progress. The targets set for them are now more challenging than they were, but could be higher still. This is the first year that the school has had a group of Year 6 pupils. These pupils are making good progress because they are taught well. The recent focus on reading has resulted in pupils making good progress in developing and using their reading skills. A potent sign of this success was the substantial improvement in the reading results in the national tests in 2005 for pupils in Year 2. Leaders and managers are examining test results and assessments in

all year groups to note areas of strength and weakness. They use this analysis to make adjustments to teaching in order to raise standards. Recently introduced initiatives to encourage pupils' creative skills have produced art work of a high standard.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

This area is sound overall, with some good aspects and notable improvements. Pupils are caring and supportive of each other. Older pupils, known as 'Red Hats', look out for any younger ones who are feeling lonely or who have hurt themselves. As one pupil said, "We get a lot more responsibility now we are older". Pupils are suitably aware of safety issues and have a good awareness of the need to eat healthily. They select fruit for snacks at break time and are keen to take part in sporting activities.

Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy their activities. Their levels of attention are high when their interest is captivated by, for instance, dramatic or amusing stories. This was particularly true during an assembly about courage. Sometimes, pupils' enthusiasm gets the better of them and they become noisy or rather too exuberant. Attendance has much improved and is above average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are friendly and confident and have good relationships with each other and with adults. They work well together and take their responsibilities seriously, not only in school but within the wider community through, for example, raising money for charities. These attributes stand them in good stead for their adult life. Creative activities are strengthening pupils' cultural appreciation, and multi-cultural experiences are increasing. Pupils are delighted that the new school council will allow them to share their views and put forward ideas.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Despite the many changes and additions to the staff recently, teachers are coming together well as a team. Lessons are generally carefully focused and well organised, so that learning is purposeful. When pupils make good progress, activities require them to answer demanding questions, as Year 6 did about 'Macbeth'. They are stimulated by lively texts, contribute to joint tasks, and complete a good amount of work. In these lessons, the occasional incidence of more challenging behaviour is very skilfully handled by the teachers.

However, these features are not as strongly or consistently present where learning is no better than satisfactory. Too much noise is tolerated in some lessons, or questions are not probing enough, sometimes requiring only a 'yes' or 'no' in reply. In others, the work is not challenging enough for the pupils. For example, there is too much reliance on worksheets and only adequate opportunities for pupils to write at length. There are indications that pupils are being given more opportunity to develop the

skills they need in order to work independently, but these are not yet extensive. Higher expectations are to be seen in marking, which often points to how work could be improved, although these comments do not always pick up on the specific learning objectives that have been given to each pupil.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

A sound curriculum is supplemented well by after-school clubs and additional activities, such as French and musical tuition. Provision for Reception-aged children is well organised and suitable, although the learning objectives for play activities are not always closely defined, thus placing some constraints on children's learning. Since the school changed its status, it has given good attention to meeting securely the needs of pupils in Years 5 and 6, and the good progress made by the Year 6 pupils is a testament to this.

A drive to integrate subjects and use basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum is in its infancy. There has been good improvement to resources for ICT since the last inspection, although these facilities are not used as much as they should be during lessons. English has been much improved by tightening the link between reading and writing and by the purchase of new books. There is a varied range of writing activities, but opportunities to write are not always given in other subjects. The most popular feature of the curriculum is the time given to creative activities during 'Special Weeks', when pupils work together across year groups on exciting projects. The school has noted a full attendance by pupils during these weeks! Good attention has been given to initiatives which encourage pupils' health and physical well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Provision in this area is satisfactory, with strong elements in the school's pastoral care. Arrangements for pupils' health and safety and for child protection are good, and staff members have had substantial training in these areas. Pupils say they feel secure and know who to go to if they have a problem. Each pupil is well known to staff, and those who are particularly vulnerable are sensitively supported during the school day so that they can play a full part in all activities.

The assessing of pupils' academic achievement has been developed as a matter of urgency. Expectations of the pupils' rate of progress have been significantly raised over the past year and this is reflected in the yearly targets set for individual pupils. However, the school sees this as a first step. It recognises that expectations of what the pupils are capable of achieving must be raised again in order for pupils to make consistently good progress. Written comments often give pupils sound feedback on how to improve, but their quality is not always consistent. The needs of the most able pupils are promoted through a local initiative for pupils with particular gifts and talents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Considerable changes to key leaders and managers, including the headteacher and governors, have taken place as the school has changed its status. This period of change, which has also included a substantial building programme and the development of provision for pupils in Years 5 to 6, has been managed well and much has been achieved. Staff are receptive to the need for improvement and they are constructive in their approach to developing the school further. This is forming a solid basis for the school to move forward, and is demonstrated in signs that pupils' academic achievement is improving. Senior leaders are increasing their monitoring skills, and are supporting the headteacher in evaluating the school's work and identifying key priorities. This has resulted in raising expectation levels for pupils' achievement by setting targets, though these could be more challenging in order to get the best from pupils.

Many parents are pleased with the school, and there is evidence of raised popularity in the increase of pupils joining the school. However, there is a minority of parents who are unhappy with the school in its present form. Opportunities to consult with parents, and give them all the information they need, have grown, but have not been sufficient to resolve all their concerns. The governors recognise that they need to take a greater role in remedying this problem. The governing body has developed rapidly, and has taken decisive action to ensure that the school can finance its needs during this transitional period. However, governors have not yet developed their monitoring activities sufficiently to fully support the school's new leadership.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Dear Children

Thank you for having us with you at your school. We enjoyed being with you and found you all very friendly and welcoming. This letter is to tell you about what we found out about your school while we were with you.

What we like about your school:

- you have had exciting changes to your school recently, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 have settled in well
- you enjoy your activities, particularly the 'Special Weeks' when you do some exciting activities and produce lovely art work
- you behave well and are caring towards others, especially at play times when you help out those who have been hurt or who are feeling a bit lonely
- you are making good progress in reading
- the school is working hard to make sure that you all make good progress all the time.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- increase teacher's expectations of what you can do so that they set you challenging targets
- give your parents a lot more information about what the school is doing and how it is improving
- involve the governors much more in checking how well the school is doing.

We wish you all the very best and, once again, thank you for making us feel so welcome in your school.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies Lead Inspector