

Bulmer St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115067
Local Authority	ESSEX
Inspection number	290118
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Reporting inspector	John Messer

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Leslie Crumpton - Taylor
Headteacher	Mrs Ellena Mortimer
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2002
School address	Church Road Bulmer Sudbury Suffolk CO10 7EH
Telephone number	01787372383
Fax number	01787311915

Age group	5-11
Inspection date	5 July 2007
Inspection number	290118

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than average. Pupils are taught in six classes. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The proportion with learning difficulties is below average. A higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the usual time, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Children's attainment on entry to the school is typical of children in this age group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides an adequate education for its pupils and its overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation of its own quality and effectiveness is largely accurate. The school has experienced an unsettled period caused by staff absence. This has been managed well but has inevitably interrupted teaching and learning. The headteacher has recently returned from an extended period of absence and demonstrates a determination to raise standards. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and good initiatives have been taken to raise standards in English as a matter of top priority. The headteacher has introduced a good system designed to measure pupils' progress each term and this is being used well to identify areas where pupils are not making as much progress as they should. The newly formed senior management team is beginning to have an impact on raising standards and this shows that the school has sound capacity to improve further. Finances are managed well and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Pupils' achievement is adequate and they make satisfactory progress overall, but progress is better in some classes than others. The headteacher's analysis of assessment data has, for example, revealed that progress in Years 3 and 4 is not as consistent as in the other year groups. Consequently, extra support has been provided to improve the quality of teaching and learning and this is proving effective.

Children receive satisfactory teaching in the Reception year, where they make satisfactory progress and attain standards that are in line with the expectations for their age. They continue to make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. By Year 2 standards are broadly average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory overall but it is uneven and is unsatisfactory in mathematics. It is better in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4. By Year 6 standards are above average in English, average in science but below average in mathematics. Too few pupils exceed the national target of Level 4 and attain the higher Level 5 standard in mathematics.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but the quality is uneven. It is not as secure in Years 3 and 4 as in the other year groups because expectations of pupils' performance and the progress they are capable of making are not always high enough.

Pupils' personal development is good. They enjoy school and become confident learners. Behaviour and attendance are both good. Pupils use computers well and this supports the wide range of skills that gives them a sound platform for their future economic well-being. The curriculum is good and is enriched by a wide range of extra activities, including a residential visit to Wales. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on promoting health and safety. Pupils develop a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and how to look after themselves. The school has introduced a system of setting targets to help pupils to understand exactly what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning. However, the system is in its infancy. The targets are currently not sufficiently challenging and pupils are not always sure what their targets are.

What the school should do to improve further

- Set more challenging targets to ensure that pupils consistently make at least satisfactory progress in each year group.
- Raise standards, especially of the more able, in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve the consistency of pupils' progress and enable them to attain higher standards.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most children settle happily into the Reception class, where they achieve satisfactorily. Most attain average standards by the end of the Reception year. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 and by Year 2 attain broadly average standards. The results of national assessments in Year 2 in 2007 were average in literacy and above average in numeracy. The preliminary results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 indicate that standards are above average in English and below average in mathematics. Most pupils continue to make generally satisfactory progress in Years 3 to 6 except in mathematics, where progress is unsatisfactory. This is partly because the school has been concentrating, successfully, on raising standards in literacy, but also because of some unevenness in teaching quality. Although the number of pupils in each year group is small and statistical comparisons must be treated with caution, it is clear that similar improvement is needed in numeracy to match that achieved in literacy. Nearly all groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress. However, results indicate that the more able do not make as much progress as they should in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Attendance is good because pupils enjoy school. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'You will nearly always see people with smiles on their faces.' Pupils are keen to learn, eager to please, bursting with energy and want to succeed. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a keen sense of justice and fair play. They are confident and self-assured and express their views firmly. They are friendly, welcoming and courteous to visitors. They know how to look after themselves and stay safe. The daily energetic 'Take Ten' aerobics session sharpens their wits and prepares them well for learning. The school council takes its responsibility for helping to improve the school very seriously. Pupils learn about different cultures in assemblies and lessons, as well as through visits in the community and visitors to the school. Special focus weeks such as 'Festival of Food' week and the 'Africa Project' help to raise pupils' awareness of different cultures. Pupils develop a satisfactory range of skills which helps to prepare them for their next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory although, due to unforeseen circumstances, children have had a number of different teachers throughout the year and this has interrupted their learning. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is satisfactory overall but less effective in Years 3 and 4 than in other years. Where teaching is good, lively delivery generates enthusiasm for learning and fires pupils' imaginations.

Teaching is less effective when teachers' expectations of the progress that pupils are capable of making are too low. Across the school computers are used well to support teaching and learning. For example, Year 5 pupils used the internet to create their own mathematical dictionary. Pupils are encouraged to study their partner's writing in order to identify the strong features and suggest improvements. This is successful in improving learning. However, the use of individual targets to challenge pupils and to help them know how well they are doing is underdeveloped.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of learning activities. The curriculum is geared to provide a well rounded education. Music, art and sport feature strongly. The range of activities outside lessons is good. Pupils can learn to play a musical instrument, including the ukulele. The use of technology features strongly and pupils use computers confidently and develop a good range of key skills that prepares them well for the future. Visits to Baker's Field and Wiggery Wood enrich pupils' learning and help them to develop a sound understanding of how to care for their environment. Educational visits support learning well and make an important contribution to pupils' social development. In the Foundation Stage there is an appropriate balance between teacher directed activities and opportunities for children to choose for themselves. Their confidence blossoms and they develop an enthusiasm for learning. The school has begun to review its curriculum as it explores the best way to teach key skills and link subjects together in order to create provision that fully meets the needs and interests of all learners.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils are good. Child protection procedures are clearly understood and consistently implemented by all staff. Pupils say they have someone to go to in school if they have any worries. Pastoral guidance is good but the academic guidance has shortcomings because pupils do not always know precisely what they need to do to reach the next stages in their learning. Target setting systems are still being developed and do not yet offer sufficient challenge to motivate pupils to achieve more. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive the help that they need and so make sound progress. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for their transfer to secondary school so they feel positive and confident about the move.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has suffered an unsettling period caused by staff absence. The governing body has successfully minimised any adverse effects caused by this difficult period. An experienced acting headteacher managed the school satisfactorily during the headteacher's absence and, together with staff and governors, ensured that the school did not lose its sense of direction. Small class sizes were maintained in Years 3 to 6 in order to improve pupils' learning opportunities and this helped to raise standards. The school made a concerted effort to improve standards in writing across the school and initiatives were successful. Most parents are happy with the education provided for their children but a significant minority regret the interruptions to the continuity of teaching and learning caused by staff absences. They look forward to a more

settled period now that the headteacher has returned. The headteacher has introduced good systems to measure pupils' progress. These are used well to pinpoint any underachievement and identify where extra support is needed. The school has produced a good improvement plan to guide its work and good initiatives have been planned to raise standards in mathematics. The new senior leadership team has only recently been formed and the full impact of its work on raising standards is yet to become apparent.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 July 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Bulmer St Andrew's C of E (VC) Primary School, Bulmer, CO10 7EH

We thoroughly enjoyed our short visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helpful.

We think that there are many good things about the school. You are keen to learn and you work hard. You are well behaved. You develop a wide range of skills in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT. Standards in writing have improved - well done! Standards in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 could be higher, however, so that's the next area to concentrate on. The art work you produce is of high quality. We enjoyed the photographs of the work that Class 1 produced on their visit to Baker's Field. Their work using natural materials, like leaves, stones and bark, seemed just as good as Andy Goldworthy's creations. You are keen on sport and enjoy music. The 'Take Ten' sessions are great. They shake everybody up and make them ready to learn. You said that one of the best things about the school is the good friendships that you make. It certainly is a friendly place. You enjoy school. You know how to stay safe, lead healthy lifestyles and look after yourselves.

There are a few things we have asked Mrs Mortimer to do to help you to learn even more. We think that you should have clearer, more challenging targets that really help you all to make good progress and reach even higher standards in your work. In particular standards in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 should be raised. We also think that learning and teaching in each class could be improved so that you make good progress in each and every year group throughout the school. I know that you like challenges so you will try your hardest and do your best.

We wish you all every success in the future.

John Messer

Lead Inspector