



English Bicknor Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 115621
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290279
Inspection date 11 September 2006
Reporting inspector Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	English Bicknor
School category	Voluntary aided		Coleford
Age range of pupils	4-11		GL16 7PG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01594 860367
Number on roll (school)	60	Fax number	01594 860367
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Helen Rodwell
		Headteacher	David Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 11 September 2006	Inspection number 290279
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

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

English Bicknor is a very small primary school with three mixed-age classes. Pupils are all White British and English speaking, and a small number of children have learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils are from a balanced mix of social backgrounds, although indicators of deprivation such as free school meals are low. No children are looked after by the local authority. Numbers on roll are falling and the school's budget is reducing accordingly.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

English Bicknor is a caring, well-ordered school, which provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education for its pupils. Standards, including those in Reception, are broadly average. Parents find the school 'happy and encouraging'. Leadership and management have developed well since the last inspection and are now having a very positive impact on the work of the school. School managers, well supported by the governing body, have consistently addressed areas of underachievement, and as a result achievement for the most able pupils as well as standards in science and writing, have improved. Progress and achievement are at least satisfactory for all pupils. The school uses partnerships with others well to strengthen and improve pupils' learning.

Recent improvements in the quality of teaching are having a positive effect on increasing the rate of progress that the pupils make in lessons. Lessons are lively and planned well to help boys and girls of different abilities learn successfully. The few pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because they are well supported. The good learning in lessons is underpinned by a well-organised and imaginative curriculum, which enriches pupils' learning through plenty of visits, projects and links with other schools. The information collected about how well pupils are progressing has greatly improved since the time of the last inspection. Never the less this information is still not specific enough to enable more precise and challenging targets to be set to assist the good work the school is undertaking in raising standards further.

Pupils' personal development is good and their personal needs are well cared for. They feel very safe at school, reporting that there is almost no bullying. Pupils enjoy school and are keen to do well in their work. Several pupils commented that 'This is a very good school'. Pupils behave well and show outstanding maturity and co-operation in the way they play together during breaks. The school is especially effective in helping pupils keep healthy and, as a result, pupils take regular exercise and enjoy eating fruit and vegetables. Pupils demonstrate many of the qualities needed for success in the future, including a good sense of responsibility towards the community and very good skills in working with others. However, because there are insufficient computers, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) in all the subjects they study. This slows the development of their ICT skills, which will be particularly important in the workplace.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make pupils' targets more precise and challenging to support teachers and managers in raising standards further.
- Improve opportunities for pupils to use more ICT in lessons so that they develop a broader range of skills to a higher standard.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school has worked effectively to improve the standards pupils reach and, although with such small numbers, ability levels vary from year to year, standards throughout the school are broadly average. Pupils, including those in reception make satisfactory progress over time. In 2006, all of the most able pupils reached the standards expected of them in the National tests, which represents an improvement on previous years. Pupils' achievements in writing also improved following a successful school focus. The good impact from the school's improvement strategies is assisting pupils' rapidly increasing progress but this is not yet feeding through into overall achievement. Good support means that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities often exceed expectations and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development and well-being is reflected in the way they play together extremely well and very safely during break times, with no disputes and lots of good humour. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well fostered and they take part in a host of events such as assemblies, school performances and the role-play of other cultures to show a well-rounded awareness. Their behaviour is good, exemplified by one parent reporting that, during a trip to Hereford, pupils were given free ice creams by a vendor for being the 'best behaved school'.

The school council is unanimous in its view that pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in good attendance figures. Pupils say they lead healthier, more active lives because of a school focus on healthy living. Pupils contribute well to the running of the school through the school council and in activities such as organising playground activities and rotas. Older pupils are involved well in local community projects, including the re-development of nearby ancient lime kilns. Because pupils work effectively in groups and pairs, raise money for good causes and show good levels of initiative, they are developing some essential skills for the workplace. Despite this, because their experiences in using ICT are not broad enough and their skills in literacy and numeracy are no better than satisfactory, preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory rather than good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching is helping all pupils to make rapid progress in their learning and this is having a positive impact on achievement. Teachers assess and plan well from lesson to lesson so that learning builds systematically in a way that is relevant to pupils of different abilities. Well-organised groupings ensure that the most able and those with

learning difficulties and disabilities receive the support and encouragement that they need to do well. Teaching assistants contribute skilfully to the work of these groups. Teachers are working effectively to widen the opportunities for pupils to review how well they are doing. The recent introduction of interactive whiteboards is very effective in helping pupils in their learning and holding their interest, and all teachers show considerable skill in using them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school is successful in providing a good curriculum, with a wide range of activities to help pupils develop socially and academically. It is organised well for mixed-age classes and, although emphasising core skills, provides good experiences in other areas such as the arts and physical education to support pupils' broader development. Although ICT lessons take place, there are not enough computers to enable pupils to develop their ICT skills in day-to-day learning. This means that, although progress in ICT is satisfactory overall, pupils make slower progress in essential skills such as the use of spreadsheets. The school works well with other schools and organisations to develop a more relevant and enjoyable curriculum, which is clearly enhancing the good learning taking place. For example, there is effective use of local castles and the River Wye. A range of well-attended after-school clubs, community projects and visits supports and enriches pupils' work in school. Programmes to ensure pupils develop good relationships and become good citizens are effective.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Satisfactory care, guidance and support ensure that pupils are safe and there are ample opportunities for them to become well-rounded individuals. Pupils are well supported in their personal development through good individual guidance and they report that teachers are 'really helpful'. The school works closely with parents to meet each pupil's particular needs, and some parents come into school to help pupils with their reading. Regular test results are examined carefully to identify and address strengths and weaknesses in individual pupils' learning. The school acts on this information by setting individual targets to ensure expected standards are met, but these are still too general to strengthen the school's good efforts in raising standards to a higher level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The head teacher provides good educational direction to the work of the school. Good and improved leadership and management have ensured that several areas of underachievement have been addressed effectively and teaching has been improved significantly. Learning in lessons is now good. Consequently, progress and achievement are improving rapidly, particularly among the most able. The successful elimination of underachievement means that every pupil, regardless of ability, reaches at least

expected levels of achievement. Several now exceed expectations, especially those with learning difficulties. Developments, which are already underway, are beginning to improve standards even further. The headteacher, staff and governors take every opportunity to improve and develop provision on a reducing budget, such as successfully developing the skilled use of interactive whiteboards and increasing pupils' experiences in the local environment. They also link well with local groups and schools to extend the resources they have to better meet pupils' needs.

Through the school's good self-evaluation, senior leaders have demonstrated that they have an accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and systematically seek to address the shortcomings. This clear understanding has helped the school's rapid progress over the last year or so. The staff team shows a strong commitment to bringing improvement and the school is well placed to continue to improve. Pupils, parents and advisers are involved regularly in school improvement processes, and this is strengthened by a supportive governing body, which focuses well on its role in raising standards. A great deal of information is collected about the progress pupils are making and this data is regularly reviewed. However it still lacks some of the detail necessary to refine whole-school targets further to better support the school in its ongoing work of raising standards.

Although the site is small and classrooms are temporary, accommodation is very well organised to maximise the benefits to pupils. The play areas are delightfully designed and every inch is used very well by the pupils.

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.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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	2

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	2
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?	2
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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming to us when we visited your school. We can see why you find the school such a good place to learn. We also enjoyed meeting those of you in the school council and joining you for some of your lessons. We found your school to be happy, well run and caring and it is clearly improving. It helps every single one of you to reach satisfactory standards in your work and make sound progress. You showed us how sensible and well behaved you are in lessons and how you work hard. Your teachers and teaching assistants have also worked hard to see that lessons help you learn more and they teach you well.

We were pleased to see that you try to keep healthy through exercise and sensible eating and were amazed at how well you organise play time and work and play so well together. We think that this will stand you in good stead for the future. We also found a good range of activities and subjects to help you learn and improve many of your skills. The subject that needs most improvement is ICT, because we do not think that you have enough opportunities to use computers in lessons and develop essential skills that you will need. The school is good at keeping you safe, but needs to improve how well your targets guide you to do your very best, and you can play a big part in this.

The work that you are doing to help staff improve the school is clearly showing results. School leaders and governors also do a good job in seeing that the school gets better and better. However, they need to keep a more careful track of how well each one of you is doing, so that you can be helped even more to reach higher standards in your work.

Good luck in helping the school with our suggestions for improvement. We wish you all the very best in the future.