



# Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Church of England Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 123144  
**Local Authority** Oxfordshire  
**Inspection number** 292595  
**Inspection dates** 23–24 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Christopher Parker

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Greenmere
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled		Brightwell-cum-Sotwell
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		Wallingford OX10 0QH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01491 837024
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	105	<b>Fax number</b>	01491 834025
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sally Dugan
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Roger Grant
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 January 2003		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average village primary school. One third of the pupils come from outside the immediate area. They are taught in four classes. There has been a recent increase in the proportion of children taking free school meals and of those with learning difficulties. In both cases they remain lower than the national average. The pupils are all of White British heritage. There has been a high turnover of staff in the last few years. Cohorts are small and attainment on entry varies from year to year.

## 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 provides a good education for the pupils. In spite of a heavy teaching commitment, the headteacher directs the work of the school very successfully. Over the last few years standards have consistently been above average at the end of Year 6. Standards in science are exceptionally high. The teaching is effective and most pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Frequent monitoring of the school's work illustrates very well how governors hold the school to account and question its performance. They work closely with the headteacher to evaluate how effective the school is and formulate plans for improvement. Subject leadership has been adversely affected by changes of staff. Although new subject leaders are now in place they are yet to play a full role in school improvement. Extensive tracking of pupils' progress and the setting of clear targets are bringing improvements in pupils' writing. However, the marking of writing does not consistently highlight what the pupils' need to do to improve their next piece of work. The tracking of progress has heightened awareness of what pupils can achieve. In addition, any potential underachievement is identified and steps taken to ensure pupils reach the targets set for them.

One parent's comment that the school has, 'a happy and caring ethos,' was echoed by others. The youngest children settle very quickly into school life. They have a good range of teacher-led and free choice activities. Adults skilfully question the children and encourage thoughtful responses. By the end of the Reception Year they have achieved a good level of development. The pupils successfully build on this good start. The results of national tests, at the end of Year 2, in 2006 were well above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.

The school provides a broad range of interesting opportunities for the pupils that foster good personal development, well-being and academic progress. The good curriculum is enhanced by visits and a range of clubs that pupils enjoy. Partnerships with parents are very strong and the vast majority hold the school in high regard. Their comments show how much they appreciate their views being listened to and acted upon. One parent wrote how she, 'made a comment about working mothers not being given enough notice of events ... and now we are given a diary for the term.'

Secure improvement since the last inspection, strong governance and the clear direction given by the headteacher confirm that the school is well placed to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by ensuring marking consistently identifies how pupils can improve their work.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so they make a more effective contribution to school improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. Many of the cohorts are small and their make-up varies. Some have a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, or who are particularly able, than others. The school's tracking system shows very clearly that most pupils are making good progress. For example, many make particularly good progress in reading while a few are not yet reaching their targets in writing.

The pupils in the Foundation Stage do well because the teaching is good. Most reach the goals set for the end of the Reception Year. Results at the end of Year 2 have fluctuated over the last few years. They have been particularly affected by many changes of staff but, in 2006, rose sharply in reading and mathematics. Standards at the end of Year 6 have been well above average for the last few years. Results in science were exceptionally high in 2005 and 2006. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress towards their targets. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides the pupils with many opportunities to develop their personal skills and enhance their well-being. Discussions with the pupils indicate that they benefit considerably from these opportunities and have clear ideas that they articulate thoughtfully. Behaviour is good. Pupils have few concerns about their safety or the behaviour of others because any incident is dealt with quickly. The school council has been effective in improving the equipment for the playground and raising funds for additional activities on the forthcoming residential visit. However, some of the pupils feel the council could also be effective as a sounding board for weightier matters, for example, when the headteacher and teachers are considering changes that will affect rules or routines.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are well informed and make mature contributions during collective worship illustrating their good knowledge of Christianity and Islam. In lessons they are confident to discuss their views of environmental conflict and show a good understanding of current affairs. They have a very keen awareness of ecological issues. The pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of staying fit and healthy and many say they have adopted a balanced diet free of processed foods. They enjoy the many opportunities for exercise in lessons, clubs and when representing the school in tournaments.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The teaching is good. The teaching of the youngest children is particularly effective because it is lively and encourages them to make choices and generates independence. Older pupils are encouraged to contribute to lessons and there is a positive approach which allows discussions between the teacher and the pupils to develop. For example, in Years 3 and 4, pupils offered interesting contributions to a discussion about the stereotypical views of characters in traditional tales. These are occasions which pupils enjoy and where thoughtful questioning, explanations and challenge are introduced to move learning along at a good pace. Tasks are interesting and, in most cases, are planned to provide a good challenge for pupils of different ages and abilities. However, occasionally, writing tasks are not precisely matched to the needs of abler pupils. In science, the teachers set pupils demanding investigations which encourage them to plan and organise fair tests and record their observations. This contributes considerably to the high standards they achieve.

The pupils' work is carefully marked and their success evaluated but they are not consistently given a clear indication of what they need to do to improve their next piece of writing. The teaching assistants provide good support for small groups and individuals. This approach helps pupils with learning difficulties to make progress through carefully modified tasks.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and interesting. It is enhanced by visits and trips to places of interest that extend the pupils understanding and motivate further learning. In discussion, the pupils talked animatedly about their visits to a Hindu temple and a Victorian schoolroom, and how these had helped them to get more out of their work in the classroom. The older pupils are looking forward to the forthcoming residential visit to Devon.

The very well planned curriculum makes increasingly interesting links between subjects. Opportunities to write in a wide range of contexts are contributing to improvements in standards. For example, pupils in Year 5 and 6 were debating environmental conflicts in preparation for a writing activity. Pupils are making wider use of information and communication technology (ICT) than when the school was last inspected. The Foundation Stage curriculum comprehensively covers all areas of learning and makes full use of the outdoor area.

The school provides a good range of after school clubs and activities which pupils appreciate and enjoy.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care and support of pupils is very strong but some elements of academic guidance are not yet consistently implemented or as refined and precise as they could be. The school has good arrangements to make sure that the pupils can learn in safety and with effective support. Appropriate checks are carried out to confirm that adults have been cleared to work with children. Risks are carefully assessed when pupils are taken on visits.

The tracking of the pupils' progress is very comprehensive and allows the school to provide additional support for those who need it. Support for those with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Productive links with organisations provide valuable support for individuals. Co-operation with the pre-school group helps children to settle quickly when they start school. The older children are very well prepared for the next stage in their education because of the strong links with the local secondary school. The school welcomes parents, provides a wide range of information for them and utilises their skills to support activities in and out of school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

'The school is highly organised and efficiently run. It is a good school, but it could be very good.' This view expressed by a parent reflects the frustration of the headteacher whose efforts to bring extensive improvements to all aspects of the school's provision have been restricted by numerous changes of staff. These changes have adversely affected the continuity of subject leadership. The headteacher currently has a considerable teaching commitment creating another obstacle to realising his vision. Nevertheless, he and the teachers have ensured that standards have remained above average and most pupils have continued to make good progress demonstrating effective leadership.

Governance is very strong and effective in steering the work of the school and holding it to account. Self-evaluation involves the wider school community. Questionnaires are used to canvass the views of parents. Staff and governors contribute to an annual evaluation of the school's performance which highlights areas for improvement. The resulting development plan sets the school a clear agenda for further improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

This letter is to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection and to thank you for taking the time to talk to me. You go to a good school and are able to learn in a friendly atmosphere where the adults take good care of you. You behave well and listen carefully to each other's views.

You are doing well in lessons. You concentrate on your work and make good progress. However, some of you could still do a little better in writing so I have asked your teachers to give you clearer guidance about how to improve each piece of work you do so that you become very good writers. The teachers make lessons interesting and lively. They encourage you to discuss important issues such as improving the environment.

There have been quite a number of changes of staff over the last few years. This has meant the headteacher has not had as much help as he would have liked to improve the school further. Some of the teachers are now taking new responsibilities so I have asked them to make a bigger contribution to making the school even better.

I enjoyed being in your school. I hope that in the future it is even more successful in helping you to do as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker

Lead inspector