

Barnham Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124688
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	293077
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bryan Skull
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Wojciechowski
Date of previous school inspection	8 October 2001
School address	Mill Lane Barnham Thetford Norfolk IP24 2NG
Telephone number	01842 890253
Fax number	

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupil numbers are rising in this small school, reflecting its increasing popularity in the area. While many pupils live locally, a considerable number travel to school from the nearby town of Thetford. Virtually all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Classes are affected by the comparatively high numbers of pupils who join or leave after the normal time of admission. Children join the school with skills that are below those expected of four-year-olds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staff and governors are accurate in their judgement that this is a good school. Its reputation is growing, and as a result, pupil numbers are rising. The success is a direct result of the happy and purposeful atmosphere that has been created. This strongly fosters the pupils' personal development and well-being, making it outstanding. These factors arise from the headteacher's strong leadership. As one parent wrote, 'This is an extraordinary school, and it is all down to its leadership.'

Parents are delighted with the way the school helps their children to develop. One parent summed this up when writing, 'The teachers are in a class of their own and exceed their duties in the care and education of our children.' From the time that they start at the school, the strong focus on the pupils' personal development helps them to settle and become confident learners. Behaviour is exemplary; this is because all adults place a strong emphasis on pupils taking responsibility for their actions. They help them to learn how to make sensible choices. They are proud of their school and are keen to participate in its activities. They trust their teachers, and say there is always an adult they can turn to if they are worried about anything. Pupils make a considerable contribution to the development of the school community through house and school councils. They also make a difference locally by supporting events such as the annual village fete and they host a monthly church service. They work cooperatively and develop good basic skills, which stand them in good stead for the next stage of their education.

Pupils make good progress because teachers make their time in school interesting. They bring learning to life through special events and by developing strong links between subjects. It is because of this that pupils enjoy school so much. Pupils are taught well and, consequently, their achievement is good. Standards are usually above average by the time pupils leave Year 4. However, they vary, because each year group has different characteristics and some experience high levels of pupil mobility. The good systems of care, support and guidance, ensure everyone is aware of individual needs, particularly those pupils who need help with their learning. Close liaison with other agencies provides the support to help them make the same good progress as other pupils. However, neither the teachers' marking, nor the personal targets pupils set themselves give them sufficient guidance about how to improve their work.

Strong teamwork focused on a drive for higher achievement underpins the school's good leadership and management. The headteacher is working towards all teachers taking a role in school improvement. She has brought more rigour to monitoring teaching. However, although a good start has been made, not all subject leaders are able to contribute to this as yet, or to the development of their areas of responsibility. Some are relatively new to their roles and are still developing their skills. Staff and governors have a clear picture of the school's qualities and are rigorous in the actions they take to make the school even better. These leadership qualities give a firm platform from which to secure further improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children are given a good start to their school life in Reception as they are taught well, but make good progress so that most reach the levels expected for their age in all areas of their learning by the time they enter Year 1. The strong focus on the children's personal development in Reception helps them to settle and feel secure in school. Parents particularly like the practice

of involving Reception children in house activities with the older pupils. The children greatly enjoy working in the classroom because all adults work well as a team, providing a stimulating environment that supports all areas of learning. Much effort is put in to developing the children's independence, although they are not always given sufficient guidance on how to make choices over the activities they should undertake. The children's transition into Key Stage 1 is thoughtfully managed through close links between the Reception and Year 1 teams.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all staff with leadership responsibility fulfil their roles and support the drive to raise pupils' achievement.
- Ensure that marking and target setting helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good start in Reception is built on well in the rest of the school. All pupils, including those who need extra support with their learning, make good progress in all areas. Year 2 assessment results have varied slightly in recent years with the changing nature of each cohort. This can have a significant impact when the number of pupils in each year group is relatively low. The school sets pupils challenging targets and they are mostly on track to reach these by the end of the year. Results were slightly above average in 2007, having fallen from being well above average the year before. Assessment results of Year 4 pupils, the point when they leave to move on to middle school, are consistently above average. Pupils are becoming adept at solving problems and investigations in mathematics. They have good information and communication technology skills, which they use successfully to support learning in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school, and immerse themselves in lessons and other activities with great enthusiasm. They say they like coming to school as shown by their above average and improving attendance. They are confident, very polite and respect others, whatever their backgrounds. They make a very significant contribution to school life through their various responsibilities, which they undertake with pride. Older pupils are looking forward to taking on the role of playground leaders, for which they have recently been trained. The pupils are showing increasing maturity as they respond to the headteacher's encouragement to take more responsibility for their actions and their learning, such as by setting and reviewing their personal targets. Healthy eating is promoted well and pupils show they understand the features of a healthy diet actively taking part in physical exercise. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups showing leadership where necessary to get the task completed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers make lessons and classrooms interesting in many ways and by doing so engage pupils in their learning. They confidently use a wide range of activities including drama and role-play to stimulate pupils' thinking. Pupils enjoy these and the chance to discuss their learning with

others, or to work in pairs and small groups. Teachers are skilled at involving pupils through questioning that keeps them on their toes and demands thoughtful answers. Pupils respond well and listen carefully to what others in the class have to say. Teaching assistants and parent volunteers make a considerable contribution to the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. Assessment informs planning, so that lessons are usually pitched at different levels, but this is not always sharp enough to challenge the thinking of the most able or to move their learning forward as rapidly as possible.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The headteacher is continually seeking ways of making the pupils' experiences more interesting and exciting, for example by forging closer links between subjects, and introducing specific activities such as 'dragon week'. Pupils enjoy the expert coaching they receive through the sports' partnerships and from the local high school. The school is looking to extend this and to introduce more out of school activities. The pupils greatly value these activities and the visits to places such as Kentwell Hall, which brought to life their work on the Tudors. The good focus on basic skills means that the school is able to meet the learning needs of its pupils well. The introduction of more problem solving and investigations is helping to extend the pupils in mathematics and teachers are continually looking for ways to make reading and writing more interesting and effective.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are confident that all adults are doing their utmost to secure the welfare of their children. All procedures are in place and rigorously implemented to safeguard the pupils and keep them safe. The regular assessment and monitoring of progress, enables the staff team to identify where pupils are struggling with their learning. If they fall behind, action is taken to get them back on track. Close links with outside agencies give the school access to specialist advice to support pupils with more acute learning needs. Pupils' personal targets are not closely related to National Curriculum levels. Furthermore, teachers' marking does not consistently help pupils to recognise how to take the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy head, is providing the school with a strong steer towards higher standards and providing interesting experiences for the pupils. Through her lead, the effective staff team is committed to continual review and improvement as well as making sure all pupils can enjoy success. There is a strong emphasis on everyone sharing in school improvement, although not all, as yet, have developed their leadership skills to undertake this role. Self-evaluation, based on the systematic monitoring of staff performance and the increasing interrogation of assessment data, accurately identifies the school's qualities and the action needed for it to get even better. Governors fulfil their role well, particularly in developing their monitoring of school improvement priorities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

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?	2

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 March 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Barnham CE VC Primary School, Barnham, IP24 2NG

I am writing to thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and your teachers and watching you learn. You were very kind, polite and helpful. You showed me how proud you are of your school. You, your parents and teachers are right in thinking that you go to a good school.

You make good progress during your time at school and are prepared well to take the next steps in your education. You thoroughly enjoy school, attend regularly, work very hard and behave extremely sensibly. Your teachers provide many interesting tasks to help you learn and you clearly enjoy extra activities such as visits to places like Kentwell Hall. All members of staff help to make sure you are safe and cared for well. You have a good understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle. You take your responsibilities as school and house councillors seriously, and make a very considerable contribution to the life of the school and the village. Keep it up!

Your headteacher, other staff and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. I think there are two things in particular they could do.

- Take a greater part in helping the headteacher to make sure you all do as well as you can.
- Use their marking your individual targets more effectively to help you understand the next steps to take in your learning.
- You can play your part in this by continuing to attend regularly and trying hard to do your best. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale

Lead inspector