

Beckley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114490 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 298554 |
| Inspection date | 12 September 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | David Collard |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 88 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mark English Smith |
| Headteacher | Margaret Hufford |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 June 2006 |
| School address | Main Street Beckley Rye TN31 6RN |
| Telephone number | 01797 260324 |
| Fax number | 01797 260324 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Beckley is a smaller than average school that serves the local village and surrounding areas. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. All pupils, except those in Year 2, are taught in mixed age classes, which are altered each year in light of the fluctuating numbers in a year group.

The school was given a Notice to Improve at the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school has rapidly improved since its last inspection and now provides a satisfactory quality of education. This is due to the much clearer focus on ensuring there are challenging academic opportunities for the pupils. These have come about through a robust evaluation and by ensuring teachers have the knowledge to intervene quickly when pupils are not making the progress that they should. The school has used both the expertise of the local authority and national initiatives well to raise teachers' expectations about what the pupils are capable of. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own monitoring that, whilst satisfactory overall, teaching is often good in individual lessons.

Most children enter the school with standards broadly similar to those expected for their age although, being a small school, this varies from year to year. They make satisfactory progress so that by the start of Year 1 they are ready to tackle the more formal work of the National Curriculum. Achievement is satisfactory through Years 1 to 6 and, more importantly, it is now progressive, particularly in Years 3 to 6. As a result, the first signs of success are now evident in the better standards in national tests. Whilst the 2007 results are similar to the national average, they represent a significant rise at both Year 2 and Year 6. Through better self-evaluation and good levels of outside support, the school has also been able to sustain these rapid improvements and has a good capacity to build on them. Consequently, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the 2005 Education Act, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Care, welfare and support for pupils are good. In addition, the good personal development and well-being of pupils have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils are a delight to be with. They are very proud of their school and show a highly positive and genuine excitement for learning. They behave well, build long lasting relationships and work hard. They enjoy the many opportunities provided through the good curriculum and work hard to make a positive contribution to the community. These, along with the strong support systems, all help enhance the well-being of pupils.

Good leadership and management have encouraged the school to be very realistic about what still needs to be done. Until 2007, standards in national tests had fluctuated too widely, particularly in mathematics and writing. These two areas have been where the school's efforts have been concentrated. Tracking data show that, between 2006 and 2007, nearly all pupils made at least the expected levels of progress in English, mathematics and science and some did much better. Led by a competent headteacher, the analysis has identified that, whilst commendable, the level of progress has not yet enabled pupils, particularly those with higher ability, to catch up on important learning that they missed in the past. This realism has enabled the school to develop a thorough self-evaluation which identifies how these issues will be addressed through this year. As the headteacher said, 'We have come a long way but know there are still challenges ahead.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of education and leadership of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and the children make a solid start to their education. They achieve the expected levels for their age by the end of the Reception year. Good relationships have been established with parents, many

of whom enjoy joining in the first lessons. The school has some difficulties with outdoor provision because of the limitations of the accommodation. Nevertheless, a covered area complete with large toys is used during the day to help build self-confidence. All work provides a suitable balance between teacher directed activities and more independent play, allowing children to make choices and to interact with others. Some children with higher ability and those ready to move on now need to be given more challenging activities to extend their achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able, by providing a wide range of different opportunities across different subjects.
- In mathematics, raise the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels through more challenging activities.

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

The improvement in all pupils' learning is a result of the much better teaching that pupils are receiving. Achievement is satisfactory and increasing proportions of pupils, both boys and girls, are reaching the nationally expected levels for their age. Nevertheless, pupils' progress is variable and still more pupils could reach levels above those expected. Reading standards are above average and pupils make good progress. In contrast, standards in writing and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics are only at the expected level. Previous results suggest that more pupils could be doing better. This is because, whilst most pupils achieve the expected Level 4 in Year 6, few go on to achieve the higher Level 5. Extensive measures had been introduced to remedy this including writing workshops and a mathematics masterclass. Improvement can be seen through the termly assessments but, inevitably, it is taking time for these developments to have full impact. In other subjects, it is clear that there are a number of budding artists, designers and sportspeople. These, along with the better basic skills, indicate the good preparation being provided for the pupils' future lives.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good personal development and well-being were evident at the last inspection and this has not changed. These increasingly articulate pupils say that all adults are friendly and help them build self-confidence and that they are kind and helpful. Those in Year 6 are capable of evaluating the strengths of the school in terms of their own development and the support they receive. The school council is becoming an increasingly useful forum for pupils to make their thoughts known. Pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. For instance, during lunchtime they waxed lyrical about the new 'smoothies' on offer, even discussing whether the 'peach one was better for you than the blackberry'. The residential trips are also highly thought of and demonstrate the pupils' good understanding of how to stay safe. One pupil explained that it taught him how to mix and how to take risks. In a recent practical safety day, pupils scored nearly full marks. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments are also strong. The Christian ethos of this church school plays an important part not only in assemblies but through day to day experiences.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching has moved on well over the last year. Previous weaknesses linked to marking, challenge and assessment have all been addressed with rigour. Common strengths include behaviour management, planning, the use of success criteria and high expectations about presentation. Teachers now have confidence in the academic standards of their classes because they are making much better use of the data that they collect. Their work is monitored regularly and where pupils or teachers are not achieving as they should then interventions are quickly made. This has helped ensure that individual need is better addressed. Pupils' targets are a key feature in this. In discussion, many pupils could explain what level they were at. However, few could then explain how they would go about moving on to the next stage. This is because, whilst teachers' expectations have improved, in some lessons the level of challenge still needs to be increased. This will then ensure that those of higher ability achieve their full potential.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard to ensure that it provides a strong curriculum even though it is limited by the buildings, the lack of a hall, and the number of staff. A wealth of extra opportunities is provided, such as swimming for Years 1 to 4, day and residential trips, music workshops, and practical links with other schools. A more recent initiative is the Primary Strategy Learning Network which is focusing on raising achievement in writing through a more creative curriculum. This is yet to be fully integrated with the planning for subjects which the school recognises is not yet fully developing specific skills. Work in books demonstrates the value that these opportunities have contributed. The yearly newspaper produced by older pupils is a good example of how much they have benefited in both academic and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care and support have been good for a number of years. With the greatly improved academic guidance, this area is now much more secure and is having a strong influence on the improving achievement of pupils. Personal security has a high profile and all statutory requirements are met to ensure pupils are kept safe. Data from national and internal testing, as well as comparative data, are used well to set targets for the future. This also helps set the school in context with others. In addition, this information is used to make teachers more accountable for their pupils' progress and for pupils to understand the reason for their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The rapid improvement, noted as 'outstanding' in the interim monitoring report by Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) in December 2006, has been due particularly to the strong and determined leadership provided by the headteacher. With the good support of a small senior team and the local authority, priorities were set, procedures put in place and their success measured. This has resulted in a clear picture emerging about the school's strengths and about what still needs

development. This strong self-evaluation confirms the school's capacity to make the necessary improvements. There is no complacency about how standards, teaching and learning all still need to be improved. The governors have also taken on more responsibility. Evidence of their monitoring, for instance, shows that they are not afraid to challenge the school and to make sure all leaders account for their decisions. Increasingly, other staff have been able to play their part. One explained that, after training, she now felt more confident and had a clearer overview of her subject. This had been helped by giving her opportunities to work in different year groups to get a fuller picture of pupils' progress. All senior staff recognise that the momentum now needs to be sustained to ensure that the right priorities are being tackled.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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? | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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| 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 1 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners | 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 | 2 |

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? | 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

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| 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 |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

13 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beckley C of E Primary School, Beckley TN31 6RN

Thank you for looking after us so well during our recent visit. We very much enjoyed meeting so many of you and hearing about all the things you do at school. I have included the main points of our report below.

- You told us that you really did enjoy school. We were pleased to hear that because we think that your school has improved a great deal since the last inspectors came.
- You told us how well everybody gets on with each other. We agree. We think you behave well and work hard. We were pleased to see you all mixing so well with each other in the playground. As you say, you are looked after well.
- We have said that we think you are making the progress that you should. Most of you are reaching the levels that are expected for your age. However, your teachers know that some of you who find the work easy could be given some harder work so that you make even more progress. This particularly applies to your writing and to mathematics.
- You have lots of exciting things to do. Staying away in Ringwould certainly sounds exciting and you have tried out lots of new activities. By the way, well done to the team for winning the safety challenge.
- Your headteacher and her staff have worked very hard to make things better over the last year. All the people who have visited have said how much progress has been made. You are taught the right things and your teachers have now got a really good idea about how well you are all doing. This has helped them set the right level of work for you.

Finally, can we wish you all the best for the rest of your time at Beckley. You can help play your part in making your school improve further by continuing to work hard and by always doing your best.

Yours sincerely

David Collard Lead inspector

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Lead inspector