

Old Bexley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101452
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	307688
Inspection date	1 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	635
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Allen
Headteacher	Mr P M Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Hurst Road Bexley DA5 3JR
Telephone number	01322 527981
Fax number	01322 553321

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: leadership, management and the curriculum including science and developments in boys' writing. Evidence was gained from lesson observations. Discussions were held with leaders and pupils and a range of documentation was evaluated. Pupils' work was scrutinised. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Old Bexley is a very large primary school in an outer London suburb in an advantaged area. A lower than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties overall, but within this, the school has specialist provision for eight pupils with a statement of special educational need for Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds, although the school has an increasing proportion from Asian Indian and Black African heritages. The school has gained the 'Healthy Schools Award'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Old Bexley is a good school. High quality leadership, combined with good teaching and an improving curriculum are the central reasons why pupils from all backgrounds and abilities make good progress, achieve well and reach exceptionally high standards in their work overall. As a result, pupils gain the personal and academic skills that they need for success in the future. Staff know pupils well and parents and pupils agree that the school is a caring place to be.

The headteacher leads the school well and delegates responsibilities successfully, so that teamwork is strong. Leaders check pupils' progress carefully for the main subjects of English, mathematics and science and all are involved in making accurate evaluations about the work of the school. Governors give good support. The vast majority of parents have great confidence in the school. A few commented that they would like more communication with the school, especially about policy decisions.

Children join the school with higher than expected skills overall. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and by the end of Year 6 standards are very high. Higher attaining pupils do very well, with over half of all pupils gaining particularly high levels in their work in English, mathematics and science. In the last two years, the school has worked successfully to help girls to do as well as boys in science.

Close links with outside agencies, and good teaching ensure that pupils with learning difficulties achieve well. Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders are fully included in school life. They gain confidence and ability to cope with their social and emotional difficulties. The curriculum has been carefully organised so that they enjoy learning and gain important basic skills.

Leaders are ambitious for the school to become outstanding in the future. As a result, they are working on enlivening the curriculum and learning opportunities, so that pupils' achievement is raised still further. In the last year more clubs and visits have been introduced and pupils are encouraged to explore things in greater depth. This helps them to develop their thinking and research skills well. Science week and visits by specialists engage pupils and play an important part in helping to raise standards in science. Good initiatives have been introduced to help pupils to develop reading and writing skills in a range of different subjects. In mathematics, there is a very strong emphasis on the development of good basic calculation skills. Leaders know that there is room for more fun in problem solving activities and greater links between mathematics and other subjects.

The curriculum is well planned to ensure that pupils participate in a wide range of sporting activities, which helps them to adopt healthy lifestyles, develop confidence and work co-operatively with others. Through sport, music and fund raising activities, they make a good contribution to the community. Pupils enjoy the clubs.

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned to meet the wide range of abilities within the classes. Relationships are good, pupils behave well and enjoy learning. Teachers have high expectations and the learning provided focuses well on developing skills from year to year. Staff are beginning to plan more exciting lessons that link together in a meaningful and creative way, although there is still more to do on this. Most teachers use resources well to help pupils to learn in different ways. Pupils commented that learning is becoming more fun. One pupil commented, 'I like design and technology because we make things like an alarm, which was fun and it connected with what we learned about light in science.'

The school has a good capacity to improve and sets challenging and realistic targets for development. The impact of such work is evident in improving writing, especially by Year 2. Teachers are guiding pupils in how to use more interesting words when writing and this has resulted in more of them writing complex sentences and gaining higher levels in their work. In particular, higher attaining girls in Year 2 made rapid improvement. Leaders are now rightly working to make sure that higher attaining boys do as well as the girls. Plans are already underway for this and include a review, with pupils, about what makes writing fun and successful for boys.

Parents agree that their children are well cared for. One commented, 'The staff are well motivated, understand our children and genuinely care for their development'. Pupils confirm that, 'Everyone looks after you'. Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge about how to be safe in the wider world around them, although there are missed opportunities to widen their knowledge for example, by helping the oldest pupils to know more about the dangers of drugs, including smoking and alcohol. Pupils take care of each other and their environment. They spoke enthusiastically about helping to make the new pond area and are excited by being involved in designing the picnic area.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They develop respect and are thoughtful. They show empathy and keenly take on responsibilities. When finding out about Nelson Mandela, pupils learned much about black history and through art and music; they expressed their ideas and emotions in an imaginative and sensitive way. For example, their singing of 'Here I am Lord' was very moving.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a strong start in the Foundation Stage. When joining the Nursery, children have a higher than expected knowledge and understanding of the world around them and well-developed social and language skills. They benefit from good teaching and learning and enjoy an interesting curriculum, which carefully combines more formal learning activities with plenty of opportunities for children to initiate activities for themselves. They make good progress and reach higher than average standards by the end of the Foundation Stage in all areas of their learning. They do especially well in gaining language, communication and mathematical knowledge. Creativity is satisfactory and is developing as part of the school's work to improve the curriculum. There has been good improvement in developing the accommodation, so that inside and outside learning is well promoted.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve writing opportunities for boys, so that more of them are able to develop very high standards by the end of Year 2.
- Make learning as creative as possible by developing stronger links between subjects across the curriculum.

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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?	2
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	1
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?	2
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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Bexley Church of England Primary School, Bexley, DA5 3JR

You may remember that two school inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly. I am writing to let you know what we found out.

Your school is a good and caring school, which means that it does many things well and there are only a few things needed to improve it even more. The teaching is good. All of the adults make sure that you are well prepared for secondary school. Teachers check how well you are doing, support you well and make sure that you do much better than pupils in many other primary schools, especially in English, mathematics and science. You work hard, enjoy learning and behave well. Teachers help you to learn in different ways and they make sure that they tell you how to improve your work and check you progress carefully. Your art, music, and sport are very important in helping you to develop a variety of new skills well. You respect others and I especially enjoyed hearing you sing 'Here I am Lord'. We think that you have great ideas for a safety club and vegetable plot, because these will help you to learn even more about being safe and healthy. You are right to be proud of your new pond area and we are impressed by how you are planning the new picnic area.

Your headteacher and all of the staff agree with us that to make your school even better they need to:

- help some of the younger boys to do even better in their writing
- make learning as fun and meaningful as possible by linking more subjects together.

You are a great credit to your school, your parents and yourselves, so please keep up the hard work. Well done!

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead inspector