

Basildon Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 109949 |
| Local Authority | West Berkshire |
| Inspection number | 310152 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 April 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | George Rayner |

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 | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 120 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Gary Bullock |
| Headteacher | Miss Margaret Richardson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 October 2004 |
| School address | Beckfords Lane Upper Basildon Reading RG8 8PD |
| Telephone number | 01491 671445 |
| Fax number | 01491 671669 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most primary schools, although it has grown in size in recent years. The great majority of pupils have White British heritage and none are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently below average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well above average. These pupils have significant difficulties in keeping up with the general rate of learning, sometimes due to behavioural needs and some have autistic spectrum disorder. An above average proportion of pupils arrive other than at the normal times, including several with learning difficulties, who transfer from other schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Most parents agree, saying that their children are happy here and make good progress. Some commented that the school's small size and denominational nature enhance its sense of community and caring ethos. The school's good care, guidance and support contribute to pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils say emphatically that they enjoy school and find it easy to identify things that they particularly like, such as the clubs and 'Golden Time' which reward their good behaviour and effort. Pupils feel safe and know well how to keep themselves healthy. They contribute enthusiastically to school life and are involved in their wider community through for example, willing participation in charity fundraising and links with the local parish church.

In recent years, there has been some variability in teaching and also disruption caused by unavoidable staff absence. This has reduced progress in a few classes. The leadership team has worked effectively to make teaching more consistent and the staffing situation is becoming more stable. Consequently, teaching and learning are now good and, together with a good curriculum, this results in pupils achieving well. By the end of Year 6 overall standards are above average, most emphatically in English and slightly less so in mathematics. Although satisfactory, progress is slowest in science, so that standards are only slightly above average. Teachers recognise that they do not always give pupils enough help to use their scientific knowledge to carry out their own investigations, or to draw conclusions from the results. They are working together to improve this, although the impact on standards is yet to be seen. Because their needs are carefully identified and effectively provided for, pupils who find it difficult to learn at the same rate as others, or to maintain their concentration, make as much progress as their classmates. In the majority of lessons, the most able pupils also make good progress. Occasionally however, their progress slows when they are insufficiently challenged, due to planning not being consistent in all lessons.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school. She leads a good staff team that shares a strong unity of purpose. The leaders rigorously monitor and evaluate the school's quality and performance. This has given them an accurate view of the improvement priorities. Good progress has been made in tackling the issues from the last inspection. Particularly effective attention has been given to improving the Foundation Stage, which was identified as the weakest area of the school and the governors have markedly developed their organisation and understanding of their roles. The school's track record demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. While their attainment on entry is generally average, they arrive with a wide range of existing knowledge and skills. Improvements to the Foundation Stage centre have provided bright, spacious, accommodation. Children settle in quickly and soon begin to enjoy learning. An improved range of learning experiences now provides a good balance between adult led activities and those that give children opportunities to learn by exploring and experimenting. Occasionally, children do not have enough time for their independent work. The adults know this, and are continuing to improve this aspect of planning. The adults work well as a team to ensure that children always have the guidance and support that they need. Even so, children show their good personal development by being able

to keep up their concentration when they are not being directly supervised. Improved assessment procedures are becoming increasingly effective for identifying children's starting points and ensuring that their activities meet their needs. In recent years, several children have entered Year 1 still with weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. Those currently in the Reception class are already becoming secure in all of their areas of learning and many have particular strengths in their use of numbers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in science, so that standards match those in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that challenge for the most able pupils is consistently good in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and their overall standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Standards are highest in English. Pupils become proficient readers and master a wide range of writing styles. Mathematics standards are not quite so high, but pupils are becoming increasingly adept at using their good skills to independently solve problems. While standards are slightly above average in science, progress, although satisfactory, is slower in this subject. Pupils develop a secure scientific knowledge, but do not always use this well to carry out investigations and they do not always use the information that they gather to help them to draw conclusions.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show their enjoyment of school by their regular attendance and the good behaviour of the great majority, although pupils say that a few of their peers do not always behave well. Pupils have a mature approach to healthy lifestyles, as demonstrated by one girl who said, 'We know that you do not have to eat healthy things all the time, what is important is that you have a balanced diet'. They can say what the school rules are and explain why they are important for the safety and happiness of all. Pupils contribute well to school life, readily carrying out a wide range of roles, including school councillors, peer mentors and classroom monitors. They say that they often have ideas for improving the school, for example by adding to the range of playground equipment, and that the adults always listen to these. Pupils learn about some other world religions and cultures, but their awareness of cultural diversity in the United Kingdom is not as strong as the other areas of their personal development. Pupil's progress in their main subjects prepares them well for their futures.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers often plan interesting activities, which succeed in promoting pupils' enjoyment and involvement. They explain lesson objectives clearly and ensure that pupils know how much time they have. This ensures that pupils know what they have to do and helps them to use their time well. Teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively. Therefore, pupils who find it difficult to keep up with the pace of work, or to maintain their concentration, receive the additional support that they need. Staff are working together to improve the additional

challenge that they plan for the most able pupils. This is ensuring their good progress in most lessons, although this is not yet fully consistent. Teachers use marking well to encourage pupils and often give them guidance on how to improve. They are increasingly involving pupils in assessing their own work. In a good Year 5 and 6 lesson, in which pupils 'quality marked' their own work, then discussed this with a partner, they explained how this helps them to understand what it is that makes writing good and to be able to spot ways to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

In addition to the required subjects, the curriculum is enhanced by French in Years 3 to 6 and the Year 1 and 2 pupils have a general introduction to European languages. Computer provision compares well with other schools and is used effectively to ensure a good range of activities for pupils to enhance their work in different subjects. In improving its curriculum further, the school is developing integrated activities, to provide more relevant and motivating tasks for pupils. This is already working well in literacy, shown for example in good quality work in which Year 3 pupils write about what it was like to live in Britain during the Second World War. There are fewer integrated activities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills, or cultural awareness, although plans are in hand to improve this. For its size, the school provides a good range of enrichment activities, some in partnership with other schools. Activities include well-attended clubs for a variety of cultural and sporting activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff have up to date training in child protection and procedures are well organised and diligently carried out. The adults encourage pupils to contribute to their own and each others' welfare. Some pupils explained how a recent 'anti-bullying' day raised their awareness of the impact of bullying and what to do if they suffer this. Parents of pupils who find it difficult to learn at the same rate as others, praised the commitment of staff towards helping their children. Several support staff are trained to help pupils with autism. The school works well with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils receive additional help if they need this. The school is improving its systems for tracking pupils' progress. These are becoming increasingly effective in identifying and helping those falling behind the progress expected of them, although these are still not as useful as they could be for predicting the standards expected at the end of courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The size of the school means that most staff have to take on more than one leadership responsibility. They do this with commitment and a strong sense of shared teamwork. Staff feel that they have genuine accountability for their areas, are clear about their improvement priorities and feel that they have good scope to contribute their own ideas. The subject leaders and those responsible for Special Needs provision and the Foundation Stage contribute well to monitoring quality and performance. Not all subject leaders are fully involved in observing the quality of teaching and learning in their areas however, although plans are underway to improve this. The governors have worked well to tackle weaknesses in their organisation and

understanding of their roles, identified by the previous inspection, so that they now support the school in its work and effectively act as a critical friend.

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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? | 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

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 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 | 2 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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

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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

14 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Basildon Church of England Primary School, Reading, RG8 8PD

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you. I am grateful for the help you gave, by talking to me and showing me your work. I was able to see that yours is a good school. Your school is smaller than most others. You make sure that this helps to make it like a happy family. You are cheerful, mostly well behaved and willing to join in. Some of you told me that you really enjoy the clubs.

You make good progress in your learning. This is because most lessons are good and you are willing to work hard. You are very good in English. You learn to read very well and I enjoyed reading some of the interesting things that you write. You also develop good mathematics skills. Although your knowledge is good in science, you do not always use this well to find things out for yourselves. This is because the lessons have not always given you enough practice at doing this. The teachers know this and are working together to give you more opportunities. I have asked them to do this as quickly as possible.

Those of you who do find learning difficult still do well, because the adults give you lots of good help. Those of you who find learning easier make good progress in most lessons. Sometimes though, the work that you are given is not difficult enough, so that you do not do quite as well as you can. I have asked the teachers to make sure that all lessons are as good as the best ones at this.

The headteacher and other adults are proud of you and know how to make your school even better. Well done to you all and very best wishes for your future lives.

Yours faithfully

George Rayner

Lead Inspector