

Burghfield St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109956
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	310155
Inspection date	1 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joan Hayes
Headteacher	Mr Antony Gallagher
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Theale Road Burghfield Village Reading RG30 3TX
Telephone number	0118 9836387
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated whether the current Year 6 are on track to meet their targets, teachers' assessments of pupils, and how well teachers with subject leadership roles carry out their role. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, scrutiny of samples of their work and observation of pupils in lessons. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils. In addition, 66 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account. 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 and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Burghfield St Mary's is much smaller than most primary schools. It currently has five classes which, apart from Year 6, have mixed aged groups. There is a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and all are fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school has a new headteacher who has been in the school for just over one year. The school has been awarded 'Investors in People' and Artsmark Silver status.

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 has brought the very best out of my daughter, it is a lovely place for her to learn and grow. It has a caring and supportive environment, not only from the staff, but from the older children to the younger ones'. This comment sums up the views of many parents who are unanimous in their support. It is a good school and is on an upward trend. Governors and many parents believe that the leadership of the new headteacher lies at the heart of its continuing success. He has made an outstanding start and built on the many positive features found at the time of the previous inspection.

Throughout the school most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, react well to the good curriculum and achieve well. They are prepared well for their move to secondary school. Overall, children enter the school with skills that are similar to those typically found and they make good progress in all classes. By the time they reach Year 6, standards are consistently well above average in national tests. This is an improvement on the past, when progress in Years 1 and 2 has been satisfactory and pupils gained average standards. Because the headteacher has built on the good teaching and learning by bringing more rigour to the process of tracking pupils' progress, the staff have been able to be much clearer about what can be expected of pupils. This has raised achievement to its current good levels, and results for the current Year 2 show a very considerable improvement in standards. Attainment now is well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This rigour is also bearing fruit in the junior classes. Progress has quickened and, for some, particularly those that find learning hard, progress is now excellent. In all three junior classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve has been boosted. This is because more accurate data is available and any pupils who are in danger of slipping behind are identified quickly and their needs met. The school sets challenging targets and all learners are clear what these mean. 'We know what we can do and what we have to work on', as one Year 6 pupil said. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain their targets. However, the school recognises that the number gaining the higher level could be increased by ensuring that their expectations for these pupils are particularly high.

Teaching is consistently good. 'Lessons are fun and we have lots of interesting things to do so I like learning', stated one pupil. Lessons are well planned. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage them well. As a result, classrooms are quiet and calm places in which pupils enjoy learning. They present their work neatly and always try their best. The recent focus on strengthening pupils' learning has meant that, as well as being clear about their targets and what is expected of them, pupils are also now assessing their work and that of their classmates. The good practice by teachers and pupils of checking against agreed success criteria is a further means by which pupils are helped to understand their progress. This now needs to bed down in all classes, and also explains why care, guidance and support are good rather than outstanding.

Pupils are well looked after in all aspects of school life and this results in their good personal development. Pupils' enjoyment and sense of security is good because staff take care of them, and help them to feel safe. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are thorough. Behaviour is consistently good and pupils say that there is no bullying. 'Everyone gets along and nobody finds the need to pick on anybody'. Pupils are quick to point out how much their sporting opportunities have been extended since the new headteacher arrived. They are particularly proud of the efforts of the school football team representing Berkshire. Pupils enjoy the robust daily aerobic sessions that are provided each day. 'That made my heart beat', said a Year 1 pupil. This participation, together with their good awareness of eating well, and

how to keep safe, helps them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and they enjoy doing so, for example by helping younger ones, and Year 5 being responsible for lunchtime activities. The headteacher has changed arrangements for the school council. This is now becoming an effective means to give pupils responsibility. Even though the pupil councillors have been instrumental in the appointment of new teachers and helping to develop the new climbing apparatus, their more formal links with classes are at an early stage of development.

The new headteacher is already much admired by the whole school community. He is seen to be doing just the right things in the right way. The improvement projects that he has introduced into teaching and learning have had a very positive impact. He has also strengthened the leadership and management roles of the staff. He has developed their teamwork and this has increased staff morale. Teachers are particularly positive about the opportunities that are provided for them to be part of the decision-making process. They are keen to take advantage of the head's determination to delegate responsibility. As a result, new energy has been put into teachers' leadership roles. Although many teachers have taken on new roles in the past year, their training means that the leadership and management skills are developing well. However, they are aware that they are not sufficiently involved in checking pupils' progress and the school's teaching and learning in their areas. There are good plans in place to improve the contribution made by subject leaders. Despite this, the school knows itself well because self-evaluation has been undertaken thoroughly by the headteacher. As a result, staff and governors are clear about the school's strengths and areas for development. The good track record of improvement demonstrates the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to their education. Many parents commented on how well and quickly their children settle. This is because there is a very calm and purposeful atmosphere in which children soon become secure. Staff get to know the children well. They make a careful note of their progress and make good use of these to plan future work. Adults provide very clear routines and enable the children to build strong positive relationships. This is aided by the close co-ordination of work between both lower school classes. This means that the children not only learn and play with the Year 1 pupils that share their class, but also the Year 2 pupils. The teachers' planning is of good quality and there is a good balance provided between those activities that are directed by adults and those that the children choose for themselves. Although the children now benefit from an extended outdoor area that helps to ensure that activities are provided for all areas of learning outside, opportunities for the use of this good space and resources are hampered because there is no cover to provide shade during inclement weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the number of Year 6 pupils gaining the higher levels in English, mathematics and science.
- Embed the current good procedures for involving pupils in checking their work.
- Provide cover for the outdoor area for Foundation Stage children.

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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	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?	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

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

11 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Burghfield St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Reading, RG30 3TX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school to see how well you are learning. I really enjoyed talking with you and thank you for helping me to find out about your school.

You told me that you enjoy school and are proud of it. I can understand why. All the staff look after you well and help you to feel safe. Yours is a good school.

It is a fun place to be where you have lots of opportunities to learn. Your teachers make sure that lessons are interesting and good. They help you to learn to look after yourself and others. Your behaviour is good: well done! You reach well above average standards in English, mathematics and science and you achieve well.

The headteacher is doing an excellent job. He has made sure that your learning has improved and I know that you are pleased about the many new sports opportunities that you now have as well as the wonderful new climbing apparatus. I really hope that if you play Somerset or another county next year that you win!

Every school wants to improve and I have asked the school to look at three things. First, make sure that more of you get Level 5 in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. Second, that you get more chances to check your own work and that of your classmates. Finally, I think that the new outdoor area for the younger children is really good and a great improvement on the smaller area before. However, it needs to have some shade and cover for the children to learn outdoors when it is either raining or hot, as it was on the day of the inspection.

You can help by working hard to meet your targets. Good luck in your future learning!

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead Inspector