

Bodiam Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114529
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311635
Inspection date	16 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	72
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Napper
Headteacher	Rosalyn Ziebell
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Bodiam Robertsbridge TN32 5UH
Telephone number	01580 830342
Fax number	01580 830029

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small school, although pupil numbers have been steadily rising. Most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, mostly with moderate learning difficulties, but there are also several pupils with dyslexia. A high proportion of pupils join and leave the school partway through their primary education. There is an after-school club.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Bodiam Church of England Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The headteacher, governors and staff have together succeeded in creating a school where pupils are happy, and where they benefit from good care, guidance and support. This helps pupils to feel safe and, with the very recent improvements in marking, it is giving pupils a clear steer on how they can improve their work. A notable strength of this school is the pupils' good personal development. Parents speak of how their children have grown in confidence during their time here. They especially like the way the pupils 'look out for each other'.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory but standards have been low. In 2007, they were exceptionally low in English. Initiatives to improve reading and writing have borne fruit. Several parents comment on how much reading and spelling have improved this year. Standards have certainly risen, although they remain below average because of the low number of more able pupils on track to attain higher levels in the Year 2 and Year 6 national tests. Able pupils have not all been doing as well as they should because they are not always set challenging enough work.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with pupils making sound progress in lessons. Teachers have created a stimulating environment that helps to bring to life the school's well planned curriculum. Teachers draw particularly well on local facilities. For older pupils, for example, their learning about the life of Second World War evacuees was made all the more vivid by their experience of packing their suitcases and journeying by local steam train to another town. They were then met by adults, who talked to them about what life would have been like on the farms on which children in the 1940s would have had to live and work. In lessons, however, teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Sometimes, pupils complete less work than they are capable of doing.

The school is mostly well resourced, with good facilities, albeit within a compact site. There are plans to further improve the outdoor facilities for the Foundation Stage but current arrangements greatly limit opportunities for Reception Year children to choose activities for themselves. At present, too much of the children's day is made up of activities that are directed by staff.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have a realistic picture of the school's strengths and of those areas where improvements are needed. The pace of change has been slowed by the sheer number of different initiatives and 'priorities' being juggled by the very small number of staff with management responsibilities. Recent improvements, however, drawing well on the support of consultants from the local authority, show the school's sound capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with skills and capabilities that are broadly in line with those expected for their ages. Parents are pleased with the way their children settle into the Reception class and they say how much they enjoy their time there. As one commented, 'My son loves school and is very upset when he cannot go because of illness or holidays.' Facilities for the Foundation Stage are much improved since the last inspection but they are still rather cramped. The narrow classroom space limits the opportunity for staff to set out varied activities from which children can make their own choices. As a result, even when children are engaged in independent activities, these are very often tasks that the adults have chosen for them. Sometimes, children

are unenthusiastic when taking part in tasks that have been assigned to them. Nonetheless, they make satisfactory progress to attain average standards by the start of Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise teachers' expectations of the amount of work that pupils should be able to complete in lessons.
- Ensure that more able pupils are set consistently challenging work.
- Look for ways of giving Foundation Stage children more opportunities to choose activities for themselves.

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 small numbers in each year group make it difficult to compare standards with those attained nationally. However, results in the Year 2 assessments have been consistently below average in all the years since the last inspection. More able pupils have not been making the progress they should. Current standards are in line with those of previous years. Test results in Year 6 have fluctuated quite widely but they were exceptionally low in 2007. Pupils did starkly less well in English than in mathematics and science. English results were the equivalent of two years behind national averages. The school believes that this sharp difference between subjects was due to the high proportion of pupils with dyslexia and other literacy problems in last year's Year 6. These pupils had support from an adult reading the question paper to them in mathematics and science but the same support was not available in English.

Initiatives this year to improve standards in writing have had a positive impact. Results of the 2008 national tests were not available to inspectors at the time of the inspection but the school's assessments show standards to be better this year than last. Predicted test grades are below average, however, because only a very small number of pupils are expected to attain the higher (Level 5) grades in English and mathematics. Nonetheless, the progress pupils make in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and clearly enjoy school. Their attendance is average. Pupils mostly listen well in class, although there is sometimes some inattention when the pace of lessons slows. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good because they respond well to an exciting curriculum that encourages them to think about others while they learn. They have responded with enthusiasm, for example, to the links that Bodiam Church of England Primary has developed with a school in Uganda. Pupils welcome the responsibilities that they take on, for example as school councillors, as well as within the village community, where they have presented evidence to the council to have the speed limit reduced on local roads. They learn how to keep safe and have a good appreciation of the need for exercise and a healthy diet.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers know their pupils very well and relationships throughout the school are good. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards to involve pupils, to highlight important learning points, and to make clear the purpose of each lesson. Behaviour is managed well but teachers do not always ensure that pupils maintain their concentration and effort. Sometimes, teachers do not expect enough work from pupils in the time allowed, so that some pupils work at quite a slow pace and with not as much in their books to show for the lesson as they should have. Work is not always closely enough matched to the wide range of capabilities within each class. Although the pupils with moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia benefit from extra support from teaching assistants and so are helped to make reasonable progress, more able pupils are not always set challenging enough work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The award to the school of Artsmark Gold and Activemark attest to the richness of a curriculum that helps to make learning fun and contributes to their good personal development. Pupils especially enjoy the themed days, including those linked to history topics such as 'the Romans'. In addition to its own good resources, the school's provision for pupils is supplemented through partnership arrangements with others. Classes, for example, make good use of the neighbouring private school's pool. Pupils' books show that, for most, there is an appropriate mix of worksheets and individual writing tasks, but sometimes the use of worksheets as a way of recording what pupils are learning limits the opportunities for more able pupils, in particular, to use and extend their writing skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for. As a parent explained, 'My daughter knows that she can raise a problem with any teacher in the school and knows it won't be ignored but will be dealt with.' Measures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being meet Government requirements. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties, and this helps them to achieve as well as the others. Pupils joining the school partway through their primary education are also well supported. Several parents wrote to inspectors to commend the way their children had been helped to settle when they transferred from other schools. Improvements to the academic guidance given to pupils are very recent but they are beginning to have a positive impact. Most pupils now know and make use of their individual targets, particularly for writing. Marking, which varied widely in quality as recently as last term, now identifies more consistently for pupils what they need to do to do better.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has set a rather long list of 'priorities' and has struggled to prioritize them. This, and the great many different initiatives that have been tried to boost standards, has served to

dull the impact of leadership and management. With increased support from local authority consultants, the school has given a sharper focus this year to some key areas for improvement. These have shown greater success in improving provision and in beginning to raise standards. Assessment systems keep a careful track of each pupil's progress, with support provided where a pupil is identified as falling behind. In this small school, much still remains under the sole purview of the headteacher, but other staff are increasingly developing their roles as subject leaders. Governors are playing an increased role in challenging the school to match its success in promoting pupils' good personal development with equally high academic achievement.

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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?	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	3

Achievement and standards

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	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	3

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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bodiam Church of England Primary School, Robertsbridge TN32 5UH

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school recently. Your school is satisfactory, and some features are good. We were pleased to see how well behaved you are and how well you get on with and help each other. You enjoy school because teachers make it fun for you to learn an interesting range of subjects and topics.

Your headteacher, staff and governors have worked together effectively to make the school a happy place where you are looked after well. Standards have been low at the school but they are at last beginning to improve. 'Big Writing' and the changes this term to give you more help through marking have helped you to do better. Some of you could still be making faster progress, though. Many of you are capable of getting through more work in lessons, and this is something that we have asked the school to improve. We have also asked teachers to make sure that work is not too easy for some of you. You can help, too, by telling your teachers when you think you are ready for more of a challenge.

You have some really good facilities in your school but space is a bit tight in places. The small classroom that the Reception children have makes it difficult for staff to set out activities for the children to choose from for themselves. With the school's plans to further expand the Reception class outdoor area, we have asked the school to look to see if it can find ways of giving the Foundation Stage children more opportunities to make choices of their own.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely Selwyn Ward Lead inspector

17 June 2008



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TN32 5UH**

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Best wishes

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Selwyn Ward', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector