

Heathlands Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, West Bergholt

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115083
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311820
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	359
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Faith Spinlove
Headteacher	Mr John Watts
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	New Church Road West Bergholt Colchester Essex CO6 3JF
Telephone number	01206240288

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	22–23 January 2009
Inspection number	311820

Fax number

01206241945

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is much larger than most primary schools. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in two Reception classes, with a few taught alongside pupils in Year 1. Attainment on entry, while covering a wide range of abilities, is broadly in line with that expected. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for a free school meal is very low. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language are very low. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The Football Association Charter Standard recognises the school as a Centre of Excellence.

A privately managed after-school club shares the school site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection's findings agree with the school's evaluation that it provides a good quality of education. Some aspects of the school's work are exceptional. Pupils achieve well, making good progress from their various starting points in the EYFS and attaining standards that are well above average, both at the end of Year 2 and by the time they leave. The headteacher successfully creates an ethos in which pupils and adults flourish. Consequently, all have equal expectation and opportunity to do their best, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with special talents. This was summed up by a parent who reflected the views of many by saying, 'My son loves going to Heathlands. He is learning fast and enjoying doing so.'

Personal development and well-being are good, and underpinned by care, guidance and support that are also good. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. From the very youngest, they display mature attitudes to learning and relish opportunities to take responsibility. While pupils make an outstanding contribution to their own and the wider community, the school does not do enough to raise their awareness and promote their understanding of beliefs and cultures different from their own. Pupils are confident in the care that they receive. As one pupil commented, 'If you're worried about something, the teacher will give up her lunchtime to listen to you.'

Pupils also benefit from consistently good teaching and learning. Lessons that meet the needs of the full range of abilities in each class effectively help to make learning both challenging and fun. Pupils who occasionally struggle with aspects of learning are supported well, while the most able are frequently presented with challenges that ensure they have to work hard. Teachers promote pupils' speaking and listening effectively and this underpins their good progress in English. Even so, questioning is not always used fully to explore the full depth of pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. Teachers assess pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science accurately and frequently. Although pupils do well in many other subjects, their progress is not measured with the same degree of thoroughness. The curriculum is also good. For example, it is organised so that more able younger pupils often make rapid progress by being taught alongside their older counterparts. Pupils also benefit greatly from a good range of additional activities and educational visits.

Leadership and management are good. The work of the governing body is of the highest quality. In partnership with the bursar, they oversee the school's finances very effectively. They are also very knowledgeable about the school, with one governor summing up their approach by saying, 'It is a privilege to be a governor at this school.' Improvement since the last inspection and the school's capacity to improve in the future are both good, as illustrated by the pattern of consistently good progress made by pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Reception classes and achieve well because of consistently good teaching and good leadership and management. Most reach above-average standards in all areas of learning on entry to Year 1. Children behave well and thoroughly enjoy the wide variety of stimulating learning opportunities organised for them. For example, they learn to count in the context of a story about a farmer and practise using correct terminology, such as

the meaning of the word, 'opposite', during physical education lessons. They make a good start in early literacy and numeracy development, and this lays the foundation for their later progress. There is a good balance between activities chosen by the children and those planned for them by their teachers. Children are happy and feel safe because their welfare is promoted well. The detailed planning and recording systems enable the accurate identification of the next steps of learning to sustain consistently good progress. The resulting well-planned and imaginative activities capture children's curiosity and develop their early language and social skills well. The staff are committed to meeting the personal and welfare needs of the children, are appropriately deployed, and use the resources well. There is well-planned and smooth transition for children from Reception to Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Do more to raise pupils' awareness of beliefs and cultures other than their own.
- Improve the extent to which all pupils are involved in responding to challenging questions to extend their thinking.
- Make assessment procedures for measuring pupils' progress consistent across the full range of subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Over recent years, teacher assessments and test results show that standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have been at least above, and sometimes, well above average. This represents good progress from pupils' various starting points. Teacher assessments and the work in pupils' books show that this pattern is maintained. Standards at the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have also been consistently above average or better. In some years, for instance 2007, assessment information revealed a tendency for progress to slow in Years 3 to 6. This is no longer the case, and standards in English, mathematics and science, as shown by the school's accurate analysis of pupils' progress, are firmly established at well above average levels. This is mainly because of the well-structured approaches to promoting pupils' writing skills, their mental and oral abilities in mathematics and investigative work in science. Pupils also excel in other subjects, such as geography, information and communication technology, music and physical education. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those who are identified as being gifted and talented all make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school's strong Christian ethos makes an effective contribution to pupils' overall good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils make an exceptional contribution to the local community. They participate with great success in the area arts and citizenship programme, highly regarded school productions, and the annual design and technology based car race. Pupils also give to charities at home and abroad with outstanding generosity. They support the education of a young person in Mozambique and another in a school in Kenya. However, the school is aware that it does not do enough to raise pupils' awareness of cultures and beliefs different to their own.

Attendance is above average and pupils' behaviour is outstanding. It speaks volumes for a school of this size that no pupils have been excluded for several years. Pupils are exceptionally knowledgeable about the importance of taking regular exercise and eating healthily. Their

excellent social skills and the standards they attain mean they are well prepared for the next stages of their education and adult life. For example, pupils love to take responsibility, such as helping to supervise the younger pupils during wet play and lunchtimes, which they do with great skill and sensitivity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and underpins the good progress that pupils make. Some outstanding lessons were observed. These were characterised by teachers' very high expectations and skills and the very positive attitudes shown by the pupils. In general, learners show interest and enthusiasm during lessons because teachers use a variety of teaching styles and methods to engage them, such as the use of film and drama techniques in English. Consequently, pupils achieve well. Pupils' speaking and listening abilities are promoted effectively and standards in these aspects are high. Even so, there are times when not enough is done to involve pupils in discussion and to explore the full depth of their thinking when answering questions. Pupils behave in an exemplary manner during lessons and as a result, the school provides a very positive and inclusive environment for learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons by a skilled group of teaching assistants. More-able pupils' needs are met effectively and helped, in some cases, by flexible, mixed-age grouping.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities that pupils greatly enjoy. Teachers organise trips and invite visitors to the school to extend the range of learning opportunities. For example, Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about a recent trip to The Globe Theatre in London. The well-matched activities and skilled support from teaching assistants for pupils with moderate learning difficulties enable them to make good progress and develop well. Good use is made of intervention programmes to accelerate progress in reading. Pupils have access to a good range of additional activities and clubs, which cover a broad range of interests and help to support active lifestyles and self-confidence. Participation levels in these activities are high. Good opportunities are provided for pupils with particular gifts and talents, such as, music tuition, public speaking and sporting opportunities, often in partnership with other schools and services.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are able to thrive in a safe and secure learning environment. All safeguarding requirements are met. Academic and personal guidance and support are effective. Provision to support those pupils who find aspects of learning a challenge is good. The parent of one child who has learning difficulties said, 'We are extremely happy with the additional care and one-to-one support provided for our son.' Arrangements to track pupils' progress over time and respond to the needs of any who are in danger of falling behind are thorough. The assessment of pupils' progress is good in English, mathematics and science. It is not as thorough in other subjects. Pupils are well aware of their personal targets and know what they need to do to improve their

work. However, the marking of their work, while often very informative, is not always linked closely enough to their learning targets.

Links with the community are good. For example, regular mathematics classes help parents to support their children's learning. Parents give outstanding support to the school through fundraising events, such as the annual firework display and the summer fayre. Arrangements to consult stakeholders at all levels about the work of the school are good. The vast majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire hold the school in high regard. Communication with parents about all aspects of the school's work is good. Even so, some parents would like even more information about its activities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher successfully promotes an ethos in which all pupils and adults are valued equally and supported well to strive to do their best. Professional development for all staff is a strong feature. The school has a justifiably high reputation for nurturing talented members of staff, and often promotes successfully from within its own ranks. It also provides an effective training base for student teachers. Subject leaders effectively monitor the quality of provision in their subjects and support their colleagues. This feature has improved significantly since the last inspection. Suitably challenging targets are set for pupils' attainment and high standards are expected. How targets will be reached and effectively evaluated is laid out clearly in the school improvement plan. The process provides a reliable basis for the school's accurate evaluation of its performance. Governors do an excellent job. They are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and about what it needs to do to become even better. They are very adept at asking searching questions and holding the school to account for the quality of its work. They direct use of the available finances and resources efficiently. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heathlands CoE VC Primary, Colchester CO6 3JF

You may recall that my colleagues and I visited recently to inspect your school. I am sure you will be pleased to learn that, like you and many of your parents and carers, we think Heathlands is a good school. We were pleased to see how well you are doing. You are making good progress and attaining standards that are better than those found in most schools. Much of the credit for this goes to your teachers and teaching assistants. They make your lessons interesting and learning is clearly fun. I was impressed by how much the children in Year 1 know about China and how difficult some of mathematics is that you do successfully in Year 6.

You deserve great credit for your excellent behaviour and for the way in which you work so hard during lessons. Well done! Another reason why your school is so successful is that Mr Watts and the governors are good at making sure that everything runs smoothly and that you have all the equipment that you need to learn successfully.

I am sure you know that Mr Watts, the staff and governors are always looking for ways to make your school even better. With this in mind, we think they should:

- do more to help you to become aware of and understand beliefs and cultures different from your own
- make sure that when teachers ask questions you all have the opportunity for discussion and to plan and prepare your answers
- look closely at finding ways to measure your progress in all subjects that are as helpful as those in English, mathematics and science.

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to wish you every success for the future.

Godfrey V Bancroft

Lead inspector