

St George's Church of England Primary School, Great Bromley

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115085
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311822
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	119
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	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Neil Fortescue
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Fitzgerald
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brook Street Great Bromley Colchester Essex CO7 7HX

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2008
Inspection number	311822

Telephone number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a much smaller than average primary school serving a rural community. There are four classes, all with mixed-age groups. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learn alongside children in Year 1. They join the school in either September or January so many children have just two terms in the EYFS. Most children come from White British backgrounds. Although there is a very small number of children from one minority ethnic group, there are no children learning English as an additional language. More children join the school after the Reception Year than is typical nationally. There are fewer children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than nationally overall in the school, but in some year groups, the percentage is well above average. After many years of stability regarding staffing, 60% of the staff have changed within the last eighteen months. The same headteacher, senior teacher and chair of governors are in place as at the time of the previous inspection.

The school achieved the National Award for Healthy Schools in 2008 and the Active mark for physical education (PE) in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Some elements of its work are outstanding. Parents and children are overwhelmingly positive about the school and appreciate the headteacher's leadership immensely. The vast majority of parents are extremely pleased with their child's progress. Parents reflected almost unanimous views when they wrote, 'I cannot praise the school and the headteacher's leadership highly enough'; 'the teachers are extremely approachable' and 'each year I see a major improvement in my children's abilities'. Pastoral care is exemplary because of the extent that children are nurtured and encouraged to thrive. Academic guidance is good because children receive clear information about the context of their learning, know what teachers expect of them and are actively involved in judging their own progress.

This involvement of children in their own learning exemplifies a key strength of the school. It is because children feel so highly valued and supported that their personal development is outstanding. Even the shyest children become increasingly confident learners. One parent described her son 'hiding away' when he joined the school, who is now an 'outgoing' member of his class. The school's Christian ethos permeates all relationships and contributes to children's exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children develop a strong sense of responsibility and justice, whether about world poverty or about their immediate experience. Throughout the school, children demonstrate remarkable maturity for their years.

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. This means that children make good progress as they move through the school and, most typically, they attain broadly average standards in most areas. Teachers plan to meet the differing needs for different age groups in their class very thoroughly. This accounts for all groups of children making similarly good rates of progress whatever their starting points. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to children's learning, especially by helping those children who find learning difficult. Increasingly there are occasions when teaching and learning are outstanding but while opportunities to share best practice between colleagues have begun, they are currently limited.

The good curriculum serves children well and supports their good progress. The high quality of sports and arts provision enriches children's experience and contributes to their outstanding enjoyment of school. The school plans sensible links between subjects that help children to enjoy their learning. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in making science more practical. The school rightly recognises the value of extending practical and creative work to make even more effective links between subjects. This work has begun. The school is at an early stage of developing the curriculum for children in the Reception year in line with the latest national requirements. The co-ordinator recognises that currently children's opportunities to learn by making their own choices are limited, both in the classroom and outside.

The school has an accurate view of its strengths, and so priorities for development are well founded. The headteacher leads a dedicated team with a strong sense of purpose. This is a school where every child really does matter and staff share a commitment to give children's care, guidance and support the highest priority. The school's links with other professionals are exemplary. Their impact is particularly evident in the outstanding support offered to the most vulnerable children. Teachers are held to account and so targets for children's learning are ambitious. The school has re-organised teachers' subject leadership responsibilities this term to make best use of the particular strengths new staff have brought to the school. This means

that all teachers are at an early stage in leading a subject. Consequently, while leadership and management are good overall, at this stage the contribution of subject leaders is satisfactory. The governing body has a good understanding of the challenges facing the school and has good systems in place for checking how well it is working towards continued improvement. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection and the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the EYFS are good and contribute to the exceptionally high quality care that children receive. Because staff understand the importance of young children feeling entirely secure before they can learn, they work extremely closely with all families. The resulting partnerships are excellent, greatly appreciated by parents, and the attention paid to children's welfare is outstanding. Relationships between adults and children are warm and supportive so children make rapid gains in adjusting to school life. Although individual children and different cohorts vary, most typically children join the school below expected levels in most areas of learning and well below expected levels in social, communication and language skills. Because teaching is good and activities are planned very carefully to meet differing needs within the group, children make good progress in a short period of time. Consequently, they join Year 1 closer to national expectations, but they are still below expected levels in key skills.

During the inspection, children were fully involved in making three-dimensional models of islands, which involved explaining their ideas for 'crash barriers' and 'pirate ships'. An adult introduced the activity, but later the children continued their work independently. It successfully enabled children to use their imaginations, refine physical co-ordination skills, explore mathematical ideas and extend their understanding of the world. This exemplifies the way staff provide suitable activities for children while harnessing many learning opportunities. Sometimes opportunities are missed for the adult to relinquish control and increase children's choice earlier in the session. Activities that cover all areas of learning outside are not routinely planned. Nevertheless, teaching is often imaginative. For example, children searched for carrots hidden outside in foliage, before determining which were the largest, and therefore best to feed the rabbit. Planned activities take account of the children's needs, to catch up in key literacy and mathematical skills, so these are areas of focus.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase children's opportunities for choice in the EYFS and ensure they have more activities available outside.
- Ensure that subject leaders extend their roles to drive improvement in their areas of responsibility.
- Share examples of outstanding teaching practice more systematically to accelerate children's learning even further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

By the end of Year 2, most typically, children reach broadly average standards but reading skills are usually above average. However, each year group has its particular strengths and in 2008 writing results were above average in national tests. Currently children in Year 2 are on track to reach above average standards in reading and mathematics. However, the consistent feature

is that children make good progress given their starting points. Similarly, while standards at the end of Year 6 vary slightly from year to year, children's good progress continues. Children reach broadly average standards in spite of a significant percentage joining the school after Year 3. The school successfully increases the proportion of higher attaining children as they move through the school. Children currently in Year 6 are on track to exceed national averages in English, to reach well above average standards in mathematics and average standards in science. This constitutes good progress overall but very good progress in mathematics. Standards in art, music and PE are good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children's personal development, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, is outstanding and prepares them extremely well for their futures. They enjoy school enormously and their attendance is good. Children embrace responsibility with impressive maturity. The school is very conscious that it is usually an all white community and places much emphasis upon preparing children for cultural diversity. Their success is evident when older children write their own 'I have a dream' speeches. They care deeply about issues such as racism as well as issues concerning the school community, such as the care of the pond. They know that adults will listen to them and respect their views, so they develop their ideas about justice with increasing confidence. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour are outstanding. Children's maturity at the Christmas production dress rehearsal was highly impressive. They have an excellent understanding of the choices available to them to stay safe and healthy. They enjoy school so much it is hard for them to identify one favourite subject. One girl represented many when she explained about the staff, 'they make lessons come alive for us'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff give much encouragement and feedback, so children are extremely well motivated. Because of strengths in planning, most lessons proceed at a brisk pace that ensures no time is wasted. Because of strengths in assessment, tasks are well pitched to provide challenge for children without dispiriting them. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to add interest and enhance learning. On occasion, when learning is outstanding in a lesson, the pace and challenge work to perfection throughout a variety of activities: no opportunity to adjust a question to suit an individual is lost: expectations are high but the lesson's structure enables children to reach them. Teachers do not systematically share this best practice in order to increase the consistency of outstanding challenge and pace.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Children receive a well-rounded education. Sports, drama, music and art feature strongly. Drama is used effectively to deepen children's understanding of a text, engage their imaginations and so prepare them for 'in character' letter writing. There are several popular clubs which enrich learning and contribute to children's personal development. Special events such as history days or working with visiting artists give children time to deepen their understanding or to develop practical projects. Children use information and communication technology to support learning,

for example by producing a PowerPoint presentation about someone they admire. Increased links between subjects are proving successful and one of the school's key areas for development is to extend this with more creative and practical work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

This area is outstanding. Procedures to safeguard children are extremely rigorous. Provision for the care of the most vulnerable children is extremely well co-ordinated and exemplary. The school makes extremely effective links with other professionals to augment this provision. Children feel entirely safe in school because they have total confidence in the support available from adults. Procedures for checking how well children are doing over time are effective. Feedback to children during lessons and in books is good. Teachers involve children well in judging their own progress in relation to specific goals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Children, parents and staff hold the headteacher in high regard. She leads the school with clarity of purpose, wanting only the best for children. Her vision includes a high priority on developing 'the whole child'. This inspires her excellent focus on partnerships within the community, which support children's well-being and help them to understand the nature of community and their roles within it. She leads a cohesive staff team, ably supported by the senior teacher. Staff work closely together to sustain the school's impressive ethos. The headteacher has established effective systems for checking how well children are doing and holds teachers to account, but with sensitivity. New staff rapidly absorb the school's ethos and begin to contribute, although given so many new roles, staff remain dependent on the headteacher for steering school improvement at the moment. Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities and check its progress conscientiously, enabling them to act as critical friends.

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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?	1
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?	1
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	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1

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	3
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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St George's Church of England Primary School, Great Bromley, Essex, CO7 7HX

Thank you for your extremely friendly welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed meeting you very much and I really enjoyed hearing your ideas about your school and your work. I agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. I can understand why you enjoy it so much.

I was very impressed by your brilliant behaviour in lessons, around school and during your Christmas production dress rehearsal. I enjoyed watching part of your rehearsal and seeing how well you sing, act and dance. You think about serious things in a very grown up way and you are very conscientious about your responsibilities in school and the community. You work very hard in lessons, which helps you to make good progress. The teachers plan interesting activities for everyone, although the youngest children could have more chances to make their own choices and to work outside more. I have asked the teachers to make sure this happens.

You know that all the staff have your best interests at heart, which helps you to feel extremely safe in school. Sometimes you make amazing progress in a lesson because the teacher has planned everything extremely well. I have asked the teachers to share their best ideas with each other more often, so your progress becomes even better.

You like and respect the adults in your school, especially your headteacher. I have asked the staff to make sure they share the responsibility for improving your school with the headteacher.

You can help your school to keep getting even better by continuing to work so hard and behaving so brilliantly. I wish you every success in the future and hope you always enjoy learning so much.

Yours sincerely

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector