

# Brimscombe Church of England (VA) Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115690
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312033
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Sinclair

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	86
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Dalby
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Riordan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 January 2003
<b>School address</b>	Brimscombe Hill Brimscombe Stroud GL5 2QR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01453 882474
<b>Fax number</b>	01453 882474

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pupils join this small primary school with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with national expectations. Although there is an average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, their distribution across the school is very uneven, with a high number in Years 4 and 5. A good number of pupils join the school at times other than the main entry and leaving times. The school has been awarded Healthy Schools status. An independently run playgroup operates on the school site. There has been a great deal of staff turbulence recently, including an acting headteacher for one term, the appointment of a new headteacher and temporary staff to cover for staff absence, both in the short and long term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. The new headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear direction for the work of the school. She has created a good team ethos where all staff and governors are fully committed to improving the provision for pupils. As one parent commented, 'There is a real buzz and drive about the school to get the best out of the pupils.'

Across the school, pupils mainly make satisfactory, if uneven, progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. The main weakness is pupils' achievement in writing at Key Stage 2. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Key Stage 1. In the Foundation Stage, teaching focuses on helping the children to acquire sound basic skills. In general, across the school lessons are well planned and organised and relationships are good. As a result, pupils are motivated and keen to learn. However, teachers do not always match work well enough to pupils' needs and marking is not used consistently to help pupils improve, and this hampers progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to work and behave well. They contribute well to the community through musical performances such as the Wizard of Oz and through their work on the school council. The curriculum is soundly planned to ensure coverage and continuity in pupils' learning. A range of visits, visitors and after school clubs enriches it. Parents appreciate their children's enthusiasm for activities such as the school choir. Pastoral care is good. Effective procedures to secure pupils' health, safety and welfare ensure they feel well cared for and confident of adult support if they have any worries. Assessments are now being used well to set group targets for literacy and numeracy, but pupil involvement through self-assessment and marking is less secure. New detailed tracking is beginning to ensure that pupils at risk of underachieving are given targeted support and this is improving their rate of progress. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, aided by the local authority, has brought about rapid improvement across the work of the school, including improved achievement. However, much is new, including the roles of senior leaders, but not embedded. A strong commitment from the senior team, improving teaching, clear action plans for subject leaders and a more stable learning environment give the school a sound capacity to improve further.

### Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

#### Grade: 3

Good induction procedures ensure children settle well into school routines. They make satisfactory progress across the areas of learning so that most are working within the levels expected for their age on entry to Year 1. Planning suitably covers all areas of learning, although there is limited detail on how children will learn through play, and this coupled with cramped accommodation limits the scope for good provision. Teaching ensures basic skills are soundly taught but work is not always well matched to children's needs and this limits their progress.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing at Key Stage 2 by improving basic punctuation and skills in complex sentence construction.
- Improve planning in the Foundation Stage to ensure work is well matched to children's needs and that play activities have a clear structure.

- Use marking more consistently to enable pupils to know more clearly what they need to do to improve and to reach targets for their group.

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**

Standards are average overall. Achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2, although there are some pockets of underachievement, particularly in writing in Years 4 to 6. Standards are above average at Key Stage 1 and pupils achieve well.

Over time, standards in Year 2 have been broadly average. Provisional results for the 2007 Year 2 assessments show an improvement with above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, indicating good progress. Pupils currently in Year 2 are continuing this good progress due to good teaching and improved provision, a key priority for the school.

At Key Stage 2, there has been a declining picture over several years with many pupils in Year 6 underachieving in 2007. This cohort suffered a great deal of disruption because of several changes of teacher due to the long-term absence of the class teacher, which affected their rate of progress. There remains some underachievement in Years 4 to 6, particularly in writing, which the school has acted swiftly to address. There is now effective tracking, monitoring of progress and quick interventions to support those not making enough progress. Targets set for the current Year 6 are challenging and, apart from in writing, where there is underachievement which the school hopes to fully address, are realistic. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and make sound progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils, including those in the Foundation Stage, enjoy coming to school because they feel safe and well cared for. Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does occur staff deal with it promptly. Their improving confidence and regular attendance reflect this. Pupils behave well in lessons, are considerate of each other and collaborate well on shared tasks. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and say, 'It is important to eat lots of fruit and vegetables and take exercise.' Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils learn to explore values such as 'peace' through regular assemblies and have a strong sense of right and wrong. They benefit from opportunities to take decisions as a school council, such as providing a quiet area outside at break times. They make a positive contribution to the community, for example staging a major musical production to which all the community is invited. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory, with strengths in learning enterprise skills such as fund-raising for charity, while their acquisition of basic skills is at a satisfactory level.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers plan lessons well, have good relationships with pupils and mainly use resources well to engage pupils in their learning. Consequently, pupils are motivated and keen to learn. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning particularly through their support for small groups identified as at risk of underachieving. In some lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge and effective questioning ensure pupils make good progress in developing skills and knowledge. For example, well differentiated questioning in a mathematics lesson in class 3 ensured all groups of pupils developed a clearer understanding of problem solving. However, there is not enough attention given to planning work that is well matched to pupils' needs and the pace of lessons is sometimes slow, limiting progress. Although some marking is good, particularly in class 2, it is not used consistently across the school to help pupils improve their work or reflect the achieving of their targets.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Curricular provision for numeracy has been improved and now provides a clear framework and layered targets to challenge all pupils. The school is working on improving planning in literacy at Key Stage 2 to ensure pupils are competent writers by the time they leave the school and make better use of writing across the curriculum. Pupils learn French and benefit from special days where they work together with teachers and visitors to learn about the visual and performing arts. They learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles and personal safety through, for example, the Healthy Schools award and visits from the traffic warden to advise on road safety. There is a good range of curriculum enrichment activities, enthusiastically supported by pupils. They enjoy a wide range of musical instruction, take part in a netball league and football teams and other activities such as a gardening club.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Staff know their pupils well and provide a caring and secure learning environment. Pupils appreciate this and say that the school is a friendly place where they look after each other and teachers are helpful. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust as are health and safety procedures. The school takes good care of its vulnerable pupils and makes effective use of outside agencies to ensure they get the help they need. Pupils with learning difficulties have clear individual education plans and a good level of support to ensure their specific needs are well met. Pupils are inducted into the school well and receive good guidance to prepare them for the next stages of education.

The school has only recently started to assess and track pupils' progress effectively but it is already using this information well to ensure that pupils at risk of underachieving get well focused support. Targets for groups of pupils based on a close analysis of test results in English and mathematics are effectively being used to monitor progress in the short term. However, teachers do not maximise their usefulness by reflecting progress towards them in their marking of pupils' work.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

After a very difficult time due to many staff changes, the school is now settling down with an empowered senior team committed to raising standards and bringing about improvement. They are fully aware of the need to improve achievement and monitor progress rigorously. Effective self-evaluation has enabled the school to make rapid improvement, particularly in raising attainment at Key Stage 1 and raising achievement at Key Stage 2. Senior staff have a clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know where improvements are needed. An effective tracking system is now in place and this is helping the school to clearly identify underachievement and quickly address it. A detailed analysis of weaknesses in writing and mathematics backed by clear action plans ensures the school is starting to target its resources effectively to secure improvement. There is effective monitoring of teaching with good support given to bring about improvements. However, this is all very new and has not had time to fully impact, although staff confidence has improved and pupils' rate of progress is accelerating.

Parents are very supportive of the school and all it is doing, although there have been concerns about the staffing turbulence and the effect it has had on some year groups.

Governors have had a steep learning curve to ensure their full accountability, but they are keen and motivated to increase their knowledge through greater involvement in the work of the school.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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**

21 November 2007

Dear pupils

Inspection of Brimscombe C of E Primary School, Stroud, GL5 2QR

I am writing to tell you how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so friendly and helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed chatting to the school council and were pleased to learn how much you enjoy school and the opportunities it offers. We found that Brimscombe is a satisfactory and improving school.

The main things that we found are:

- You make good progress in Years 1 and 2.
- You enjoy school, work hard and are keen to learn.
- You are well cared for and in turn are thoughtful and kind to each other.
- You enjoy all the clubs and sporting activities that are on offer.

We are asking the school to make these improvements so that it is even better.

- Improve your skills in writing at Key Stage 2 so that you make better progress.
- Improve marking so that you are clear about what you need to do to improve, both in your work overall and to meet your targets.
- Improve planning in the Foundation Stage so that all activities, including play activities, fully challenge children.

You can help by working hard and doing your best. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Sinclair Lead inspector

21 November 2007



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Yours sincerely

Janet Sinclair  
Lead inspector