

# Barley Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117386
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312597
<b>Inspection date</b>	3 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Harvey

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>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	45
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Phipps
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Price
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 September 2004
<b>School address</b>	Church End Barley Royston Hertfordshire SG8 8JW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01763 848281
<b>Fax number</b>	01763 848281

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: whether all pupils achieve as well as they can, particularly in mathematics, whether teachers use assessments effectively, the impact of academic guidance on achievement and standards and the impact of leadership and management since the last inspection. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff and governor representatives. In addition, there was observation of parts of several lessons, scrutiny of school information and its self-evaluation statement, analysis of samples of pupils' work, evaluation of parents' questionnaires, and discussions with pupils. 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

This is a much smaller than average size school, serving the village of Barley near Royston and its surrounding area, though several pupils come from farther afield. The number entitled to free school meals is lower than average. All pupils are from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or a disability including those with a statement of special educational need is higher than found nationally. The school has achieved the Hertfordshire Quality Standards Award for Nursery and Reception, a Healthy Schools Award and Health and Safety Awards.

## 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 features are outstanding. Pupils enter this small school with a range of levels of knowledge and understanding that are broadly similar to those expected for their age. They make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their various starting points. By the time they leave the school, they often attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Leaders of the school recognise that though pupils do well in mathematics, there is a need to address the small gap in attainment between this and other subjects. Arrangements to ensure children are appropriately supported and progress well in the Foundation Stage are good.

The school's success arises from the clear vision and purpose shared by the headteacher, governors and the caring and committed staff team. The positive Christian ethos and family atmosphere are evident on entering the school. The school environment is nurturing yet challenging, so pupils become well-rounded individuals. As a result, pupils not only achieve well academically but most of their personal achievements are exceptional. It is not surprising that parents are highly appreciative of the school. One wrote 'I couldn't be happier with Barley school and what it has done for my children...They have come to really enjoy learning. The friendly, genuinely caring teaching staff have helped them shine as people. This school has encouraged their natural enthusiasm'. This comment represents the views of many who responded to the questionnaire. Pupils echo this sentiment in their demonstration of exceptional levels of enjoyment and good attendance.

Pupils' personal development, including their social, moral and spiritual development is outstanding. Their cultural development is good. Behaviour of the majority is exemplary. Pupils set their own high expectations and make sure that everyone in school maintains them. Pupils are encouraged to express their opinions and to accept responsibilities, allowing them to grow in confidence. They take pride in helping others and in looking after each other, their school and the environment beyond. They demonstrate an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and how to keep themselves and each other safe. The combination of good literacy and numeracy skills and their highly developed personal skills equips pupils well for the next stage of education and life. Providing good care and guidance is central to the school's ethos and includes systems for ensuring high levels of health, safety and welfare of pupils. Safeguarding procedures meet with requirements. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that there is always someone to help them with any problems. Adults go the extra mile to reduce any barriers to learning and make sure that everyone is included in everything that the school has to offer.

Teaching is good; pupils are inspired by the enthusiastically delivered and conscientiously planned lessons. These now contain an increasing number of practical, hands-on and problem solving activities to engage them. Leaders recognise the need to continue developing the accurate use of teachers' assessments in order to ensure teachers plan to consistently challenge all pupils, particularly in relation to mathematics. Relationships are extremely positive, resulting in pupils being keen to work hard and behaving exceptionally well. Those who find learning more difficult get good support, both individually and in groups from skilled teaching assistants, so these pupils achieve well and sometimes exceptionally so. Recent initiatives, including the teaching of phonics and a focus on writing are beginning to pay dividends. Pupils' progress in reading and writing is starting to speed up. Systems to provide academic guidance are based on regular and rigorous checks of assessments and result in individual feedback which pupils

say help them to improve. However, not all children know these individual targets well enough, how to achieve them or are sufficiently skilled in measuring their own success and directing themselves towards the next steps in their learning.

The good curriculum is well focused, ensuring the development of pupils' important basic skills. A carefully thought out programme of personal, social and health education successfully helps to encourage pupils' remarkable personal skills. Pupils enjoy a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs that go beyond the required subjects. A new and creative approach to delivering the curriculum has been introduced which involves subjects being taught through topic themes that bring learning alive and make it memorable for children, giving them more opportunities to practise their basic skills in other subjects. This approach has yet to become embedded across the school and its impact on the progress pupils make in their knowledge and skills measured.

Leadership and management are good at all levels. Leaders know the school well, have high expectations and set and meet challenging targets. Governors offer a good degree of support and challenge and are well involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The school places itself at the heart of its community, forging very positive and highly effective partnerships with other agencies. These include the local parish church and particularly with parents whose contributions are many and varied. All partnerships add considerably to the enrichment of pupils' experience. Leaders are looking to working even more closely with the small minority of parents who have expressed any concerns about the work of the school. They want to make sure that all parents have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and a realistic understanding of how well it is addressing their views. Considering that, good progress has been made in addressing the issues identified at the time of the last inspection and that improvements have continued to be made, this demonstrates a good capacity to continue to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children do well in the Foundation Stage. They settle quickly because of the good support and knowledge of staff. Children feel secure and ready to learn because of the excellent relationships formed between the staff, the children and their parents and carers. Exciting activities and topic themes are carefully planned based on a good knowledge of children's needs. These are taught well and sometimes exceptionally so by teachers and teaching assistants, ensuring that children make good and sometimes excellent progress from whatever their starting points. Consequently, children are currently on target to exceed the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. This offers children opportunities to practise what they are learning in different ways often through continuous topic themes. An excellent start has been made to the regular and rigorous teaching of early phonic skills. School leaders are looking forward to developing the outdoor environment in order to further extend children's learning in all areas, throughout the year. The information collected about how well children are doing in their Nursery Year is not yet used as effectively as that for their Reception Year.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure teachers consistently plan work that challenges pupils of all abilities, particularly in mathematics.

- Ensure that pupils are always clear about their next steps in learning, how to achieve them and how to measure their own success.

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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 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 <sup>1</sup> 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?	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
How well 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	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

<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>	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

4 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Barley CofE Voluntary Controlled First School, Barley, SG8 8JW.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. This letter is to tell you what I found out.

There are many good things about your school. Some of them are that:

- You behave extremely well and work hard to help others;
- your knowledge of how to keep yourself healthy and safe is outstanding;
- you enjoy school a great deal and the school is good at organising interesting things for you to do;
- all of the adults in your school make sure that you are well cared for and looked after;
- your headteacher, and all of the other people who help run your school, are highly effective at making sure that you get a good education.
- There are excellent partnerships with your parents and the local community.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school. However, all of the adults in your school want it to be even better. To help them with this the most important things for them to do next are:

- to plan lessons that really challenge you all, particularly in mathematics;
- make sure you are always clear about the next steps in your learning, especially how you are to achieve these, and how you can measure your successes.

I certainly enjoyed talking with you and finding out all about your school. I particularly enjoyed seeing you playing and working so hard but so cooperatively together, politely, and proudly carrying out the jobs that you do. Keep on working hard, doing your very best, coming to school every school day and enjoying your time at school.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector