

Bayford Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117387
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312598
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Helen Ranger

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Beverley Wills
Headteacher	Mr Peter Jessop
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003
School address	Ashdene Road Bayford Hertford Hertfordshire SG13 8PX
Telephone number	01992511259
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school mainly serves the villages of Bayford and Brickendon but, as a result of parental choice, pupils also come from a much wider area. Fewer than average are entitled to free school meals. When children start in Nursery, they have a wide range of skills which, overall, are broadly in line with the levels expected for three-year-olds, although some children lack the social skills needed for school.

Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and no pupil is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average at present. It has risen recently because the school is identifying pupils who will benefit from extra help as early as possible. Staffing difficulties outside the school's control meant that the continuity of teaching for pupils in Years 5 and 6 was disrupted during the academic year 2005 to 2006. This has now stabilised again.

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. A parent's comment encapsulates the school's successes: 'My child is achieving well and makes me proud as his parent. I feel the school offers a good 'all round' education to all the pupils'. As well as enabling pupils to make good progress academically, their personal development and well-being are fostered exceptionally well by excellent care, guidance and support. Pupils enjoy school immensely. They behave extremely well and feel safe and secure in their learning, so are very well prepared to take advantage of all the school offers. There is a very close partnership with parents who, as one put it, 'very much feel a part of the school family'.

From the start, pupils are taught well. An outstanding feature of the Foundation Stage is the way that personal, social and emotional development is supported. The youngest children settle quickly. By the end of Reception, attainment is mostly above the levels expected nationally. Good progress continues in Key Stage 1. Standards by the end of Year 2 have generally been well above average in recent years and, at times, exceptionally high. Standards by Year 6 have varied more widely but pupils have achieved well in relation to their starting points. Year 6 pupils are currently on track to reach above average standards in their end-of-year tests. Standards in mathematics across the school are higher than English. Within English, standards of writing skills are often lower than pupils' speaking, listening or reading abilities.

The school has continued to improve well since its last inspection and is well placed for the future. At the heart of its achievements are effective leadership and management, based on good monitoring. Staff track pupils' individual progress regularly and, for example, have taken prompt action to improve writing as a result. The tracking systems for younger and older pupils are very similar and are used well to set individual, class and key-stage targets. However, the available information is not analysed enough on a whole-school basis. As a result, staff and governors do not have easy access to an overview of the progress pupils make across the school with which to inform their planning.

The curriculum has been developed very well in recent years and is now excellent. Some initiatives, such as those to improve pupils' writing, have not yet had a full impact on standards, but the school provides a rich and varied range of activities. Productive links with other schools and agencies have given pupils a wider range of physical activities and clubs than a small school could normally provide. Alongside the regular provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, this means that pupils have a first-rate understanding of how to lead healthy lives. Taken together with their good academic skills, they are well prepared for the next stage of education and are developing solid foundations for their future lives.

Staff and governors work well together. Except for the more complete picture of overall achievement that is needed, they have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They produce detailed, relevant plans for future developments. The criteria identified for monitoring initiatives are generally good, but some lack a sharp enough focus on how the school will check that any actions have resulted in improved outcomes for pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get a good start in the Foundation Stage. There is very good liaison between Nursery and Reception staff that ensures continuity across both years. Adults provide an interesting

range of well-planned and well-organised activities, both indoors and outside. Children have opportunities to work independently and to make choices, as well as experiencing focused activities alongside adults. They make good progress in all areas of learning. There are effective arrangements to ensure a smooth transition to Year 1. The Foundation Stage teacher is scrupulous in her assessments of individuals. This means that staff have very good quality information to ensure that their planning caters for the full range of needs and interests.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that writing standards rise as a result of changes to the curriculum and how it is taught.
- Use tracking information to provide a clearer view of how well pupils achieve across the school as a whole.
- Ensure that action plans include a consistently sharp focus on how the impact of initiatives on pupils will be checked.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils from all backgrounds do well academically. The national assessments in Year 2 demonstrate pupils' good progress in Key Stage 1. In 2007, pupils reached high standards in English. Results in mathematics were particularly strong because all pupils reached at least Level 2 and half reached Level 3. The current Year 2 pupils are on course to reach above average standards this year in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year, the results of Year 6 tests were mostly good, although a smaller than average proportion of pupils reached Level 5 in English. The current Year 6 group is working at above average standards. This is reflected in school targets which indicate a significant improvement in the proportion working at Level 5 in English. Pupils who need extra help with learning and those who find lessons easier do equally well for their capabilities. The early identification and regular monitoring of any special learning needs ensure that this continues to be the case.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is a significant strength. Their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The oldest pupils are mature, considerate and thoughtful. Bullying and racism are notable by their absence. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is reflected in improved attendance rates. The school has made good progress with the very small number who had poor attendance records so that current attendance is above the national average. Pupils contribute extremely well to the school and wider community through activities such as their school council, charity fund raising and parish activities. They have worked at a local animal park to design a garden and seating area. They have a good understanding of the wider world, exemplified by their links with an Indian school and visits such as those to a synagogue and a Hindu temple.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all age groups. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. There are outstanding features, such as the quality of relationships that underpin lessons and the support given to those with learning difficulties or disabilities which enables them to play a full part in activities. Teaching addresses any apparent gaps in provision; for instance, teachers are increasingly planning writing activities that link subjects together, so that pupils are better motivated to write for a range of purposes. Pupils are engaged well by good use of resources, including interactive whiteboards. The day-to-day assessment of learning is effective. Marking is mostly good, especially in English. Pupils receive accurate feedback on their achievements, but are not always given enough time to reflect on the marking or to decide for themselves how they can improve their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school offers an outstanding curriculum. In response to an issue for improvement from the previous inspection, there has been very good progress in ensuring that activities are planned to match the wide range of ages and abilities in each class. Additionally, the range of clubs and visits has been extended very well. The playground is well developed as an attractive and exciting area at breaktimes. The building has been extended and improved. Links with other small schools and with organisations such as the local sports partnership have greatly benefited pupils. Pupils with particular gifts or talents are identified and catered for where possible, for example, by challenging activities in lessons or through art and music clubs. There is detailed planning which very effectively meets the needs of pupils who require extra help, typified very well by the individual education plans for these pupils and by various support groups and booster classes.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The day-to-day care of pupils is of high quality, based on the close links between home and school. Procedures to safeguard pupils and promote their health and safety are very detailed and rigorous. The arrangements for pupils who are vulnerable in any way are managed very well, including effective links with other agencies, such as the specialist services of the local authority. The inclusion coordinator carries out her duties very diligently and monitors pupils' individual progress carefully. Academic support and guidance are good and reflect teachers' detailed tracking of individual progress. Pupils are given relevant personal and group targets which they know very well and which are shared and discussed with parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

There is a strong spirit of teamwork in the school. While responsibilities are officially shared among staff, in practice everyone pulls together for the benefit of the pupils. The headteacher is well respected and knows the school and its families well. He works closely with the chair of

governors. The governors bring a wide and relevant range of skills to their roles. They support and challenge the school well. Although there is scope for further improvement in how pupil tracking information and monitoring criteria are used to check overall performance, the school already uses a good range of relevant self-evaluation strategies. For example, the headteacher and subject leaders carry out regular lesson observations, examine pupils' work and talk to pupils about their learning. Effective use is made of a wide range of training opportunities for staff and governors. Development plans reflect the shared vision of the main partners in the school's work and the determination to continue to improve provision for pupils.

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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 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 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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	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

6 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Bayford Church of England Primary School, Bayford, Hertford SG13 8PX

This letter is to thank you for your welcome and help during my recent visit. Many of you, and many of your parents, told me that you think your school is really good. I agree! Mr Jessop makes sure that the staff and governors work together to provide you with good lessons and an extremely interesting range of activities. You told me how much you enjoy school and I saw for myself your enthusiasm and excellent behaviour.

The teachers work closely with your parents to make sure that you are growing into sensible and thoughtful young people. The school council gave me an excellent presentation about how you learn to be healthy and to stay safe. You also do well learning other important skills such as in literacy and mathematics. Your teachers are trying to make sure that you all become even better writers and I have asked them to carry on with this. You can help by listening carefully to the adults' advice and trying your best with your own writing.

The teachers check your work regularly so that they know how well you are doing term by term. I have asked them to use the information they collect to check your progress right through the school. That means from when you start to when you leave, so that they know you are doing as well as you can.

The last thing I have asked the adults to do is, if they make any changes to your school, to check that these end up helping you to learn even more.

I shall remember your school as the one with those spectacular views over the countryside, but also as one with so many cheerful and hard working pupils.

Best wishes for the future

Helen Ranger

Lead Inspector