

St Bartholomew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Wigginton

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117463
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312623
Inspection dates	10–11 April 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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Crichton
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Kemp
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Common Field Wigginton Tring Hertfordshire HP23 6EP
Telephone number	01442822364
Fax number	01442 828230

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school whose roll is rising as more parents choose it for their children. It serves the village of Wigginton and the surrounding area, which includes a wide cross-section of housing and economic circumstances. Almost all pupils are White British and none is at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average overall but varies greatly between year groups. Children join the Reception class with a very wide range of attainment. They generally have well developed social skills but their language and mathematics abilities are often below the levels expected nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This increasingly popular school provides a good quality of education. Its success results from the effective teamwork of the staff and their commitment to ensuring that pupils develop well both academically and personally. In her seven terms at the school, the energetic headteacher has built very well on its former achievements. She has translated her clear vision and high expectations into action that has resulted in very well motivated pupils and has developed staff who cheerfully describe their quest for further improvements as 'relentless'. Parents are highly positive about the school and its importance to the parish and village. A typical comment from a parent described, 'a real family atmosphere and a real community feel to the school.'

Building on the excellent start that the youngest children make in Reception, good teaching means that pupils reach above average standards by Year 2. Results in the Year 6 tests in recent years have improved faster than nationally so that in 2007, pupils reached above average standards in mathematics and exceptionally high standards in English and science. The school is determined to ensure that each individual fulfils their potential. Regular assessments in key skills track each pupil's achievements. The assessments have indicated that some pupils can do even better in writing and mathematics, especially those who find learning easier. The school is now working to tailor lessons more closely to providing such pupils with the activities they need to excel. Pupils already benefit from very detailed feedback on their English work and have become skilled in assessing for themselves how well they are doing. This is supporting more efficient learning. Similar good practice is not yet as evident in mathematics and this is an area for further improvement.

Staff create an extremely caring and stimulating atmosphere in the school. An outstanding curriculum is provided. Some elements, such as aspects of the literacy and numeracy provision, are relatively new and yet to have a full impact on standards. Nevertheless, pupils talk about their enormous enjoyment of the range of activities on offer in all subjects and their appreciation of the extensive extra-curricular programme. They also value the way that adults treat them. They are well aware of the high standards of conduct expected of them and rise to the challenge. Consistently high attendance and the many instances of exemplary behaviour mean that pupils take full advantage of opportunities for learning. They have an excellent understanding of how to maintain healthy lifestyles and show due concern for their own safety and that of others. They are very involved in decision making within the school and contribute exceptionally well to the local community.

A number of staff changes have taken place over the past two years. These have been managed well by the headteacher and governors, so that new staff work effectively alongside more experienced colleagues. A key feature in the school's improvement has been the extent to which teachers are now more closely involved in monitoring standards and provision and are instrumental in identifying what can be developed next. Several of the governors also play a valuable monitoring role and build up a clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is not yet the case with all governors so that their role in school self-evaluation, while effective, is not shared widely enough to accelerate the pace of change even more.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Staff in the Reception class give children an outstanding start. They develop children's positive attitudes to learning to a very high level. The children are extremely well behaved and polite, taking turns and showing a good awareness of the needs of others. Frequent assessments of each individual are used well to ensure that activities are planned to meet the full range of needs in the class. School records show that children make very good progress across all areas of learning to reach levels by the end of Reception that are above those expected nationally. The teacher organises a range of interesting and imaginative activities very well. This includes making good use of the rather limited outside space, so that learning can flow between indoors and out. An important feature of the provision is how far children are encouraged to be independent learners who can plan their learning and make their own choices.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum in writing and mathematics if they are capable of doing so.
- Extend the good practice found in teachers' marking and pupils' self-assessment in English to enhance pupils' understanding of their learning in mathematics.
- Enable all governors to contribute equally effectively to the rigorous monitoring of standards and provision.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all capabilities make good progress and achieve well. The schools accurate records show that current pupils are well on track to continue the trend of good academic achievement that has been reflected in past performance. For example, as in 2007, pupils who are now in Year 2 are all predicted to reach at least Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion likely to reach Level 3 in both writing and mathematics is higher this year and this indicates the success of recent initiatives in these two areas. Year 6 pupils are working at well above average levels. The proportion working at Level 5 is higher this year than last in both English and mathematics and much higher than the national average. Here again the action on writing and mathematics has been well targeted. The quality of tracking arrangements has improved well. This ensures that any pupil in danger of falling behind or of underachieving is quickly spotted and action is taken to give additional support or challenge as appropriate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils demonstrate a high standard of personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The older pupils are considerate and encouraging to the younger ones. They carry out responsibilities conscientiously, for example as the 'Sort Out Squad' in the playground and as house captains. The school council is active in representing pupils' views and organising events such as charity fundraising. Of special note are the opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge of the wider community. These include work shadowing with their parents, working with local magistrates and involvement in a project for homeless people. Pupils learn about the diversity of modern British culture through events

such as a mosque visit. The combination of their excellent social skills and good academic and practical achievements mean that pupils have really solid foundations for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Very good relationships in classrooms enhance learning. The range of 'intervention programmes' has been developed well to cater for pupils needing additional help. Attention has recently focused on ensuring that higher attaining pupils are also adequately stretched. There are good indications so far of the positive impact on standards of this initiative. Following the headteacher's arrival, the systems for assessing, tracking and analysing pupils' progress were systematically reviewed. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at using these systems to inform lesson planning for all individuals. Improved arrangements for marking and pupil self-assessment are rapidly being established. For example, pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on lessons, respond to teachers' marking and to 'colour code' how well they have completed an activity.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The excellent curriculum benefits from constant monitoring by staff. If appropriate, changes are made in response to careful analysis of what is needed to raise standards further. As well as the required curriculum, there is an excellent variety of additional clubs and interesting events. Pupils speak very enthusiastically of aspects of provision such as cross-country running, inter-school sport, the breakfast club and a host of other physical and social pursuits. Opportunities such as these have led to the Healthy School award. Almost every pupil takes part in at least one school club. The school's accommodation is attractive and used to the full. The outdoor area has been developed very well as a pleasant and stimulating environment that supports pupils' learning and leisure time.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

High levels of pastoral care are provided. These draw on the very close links between home and school, and parents are very appreciative of the levels of personal support their children receive. The school is vigilant in its arrangements to safeguard pupils. There are excellent arrangements for ensuring that Reception children settle into school quickly and happily. Close links with the nearby secondary school ensure a smooth transition for Year 6 pupils. The special needs coordinator manages provision very efficiently for pupils who need additional help with learning or behaviour. There are good relationships with other community agencies such as health services for pupils who require specialist support. Target setting for pupils is a model of good practice. Pupils are knowledgeable about their own performance, especially in key English skills. They speak very positively about how this helps them to understand what they have done well and what to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Very good staff development arrangements ensure that teachers are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in standards and provision and of their part in bringing about improvements. The school has faced some significant staffing and financial challenges that have been successfully resolved through the teamwork of staff and governors and, most notably, through the determination of the headteacher. The governors bring a good range of skills and experience to their role and the chair of governors is very active in the school's strategic management. A core of governors carries out efficient monitoring and the school is rightly encouraging other governors to become even more involved in holding the school to account. Although the school's view of itself is somewhat modest, its self-evaluation systems have been highly effective and much has been achieved in recent times. These factors demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

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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	1
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	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, Wigginton, Tring HP23 6EP

This letter is to thank you for the very friendly welcome I received on my recent visit to your school. Special thanks go to the group who gave up some extra time to talk to me. They told me how much you enjoy school. Many of your parents also wrote to tell me that they think your school is really good.

I can see why you are so happy with your school. I agree that it is a good place to learn and to make friends. I met a lot of thoughtful and sensible young people who take part in so many healthy, exciting activities. You are good at helping other people and taking responsibilities both in school and in the local area. Your families must be proud of you and you can certainly be proud of yourselves!

Your teachers are good and they make sure you do well in your work. They keep a close check on how each one of you is doing. They give you help if you need it but also encourage you to be independent. I have asked them to carry on making sure that you do as well as possible particularly in writing and mathematics, especially those of you who find learning quite easy. I was very impressed with how your teachers mark your literacy work and how you have started to check your own work. I think it would be useful for your school to have a similar system for mathematics too. You can help with this by carefully checking for yourself how well you have done at the end of each lesson. In that way you will know what you need to improve next.

Mrs Kemp makes sure that the staff and governors all work together in a good team to help your school run smoothly. I have asked the governors to do even more to find out about how well the school is doing. In that way, they can carry on helping the staff to make your school as good as possible.

Keep on enjoying all your school offers you.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Ranger

Lead inspector