

Bidborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118598
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313008
Inspection date	11 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Hewitson
Headteacher	Andrew Tulloch
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2002
School address	Spring Lane Bidborough Tunbridge Wells TN3 0UE
Telephone number	01892 529333
Fax number	01892 616487

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils at this one-form entry school are White British but a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds; all speak English. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than in most schools.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the consistency in the rates of progress made by all groups of pupils; the effectiveness of subject leaders; and the use of assessment and target setting.

Evidence was gathered from samples of work, lesson observations, various sources of data, a range of written documents, discussions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, core subject leaders, Foundation Stage teacher, the additional educational needs coordinator, representatives of the governing body, pupils and the school's adviser.

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.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bidborough CE VC Primary is a good school with some outstanding features. The school has a happy atmosphere that promotes effective learning. It has developed very well since the last inspection because of its keenness to address areas for improvement. Widening the leadership structure and devolving some leadership responsibilities with clear and challenging parameters have helped to sharpen the school's self-evaluation systems. Subject leaders' monitoring of provision and standards is effective because it draws on a wide range of evidence, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Subject leaders use this information well to form clear plans for development and to evaluate outcomes. Together with effective teaching, these changes have contributed to the pupils' good achievements and well-above-average standards of work by Year 6.

The headteacher and staff work very well as a team, resulting in a sense of loyalty and commitment from the classrooms to the kitchen that ensures that whole-school initiatives are delivered to good effect. The school's rigorous examination of test results keeps it alert to areas of comparative weakness in aspects of learning. It is quick to obtain expert professional advice to identify new approaches to teaching and learning to overcome any identified weaknesses. Subject leaders have taken a good lead in these matters, for example, an initiative in English to improve writing by introducing new materials enhanced pupils' learning of letter sounds to support their writing. This initiative also took account of pupils' own views of the teaching of writing. Writing standards have consequently improved. Monitoring in science has identified that investigation can be further improved, especially for pupils who show greater ability. Advice has been sought on this and action has begun. The staff's self-evaluation also recognises that more effective links between subjects can further enliven the curriculum, which is already supported well by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

A very good feature of the school is the effective tracking system to monitor pupils' progress. This enables staff to intervene swiftly and put in added support when pupils are not making expected progress. Additionally, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good help from staff, including a strong team of well-trained teaching assistants, so that these pupils make good progress also. Pupils' own learning targets from the Foundation Stage upwards and their own self-assessment of how they can improve, combined with the comments from marking, give pupils a good awareness of the next steps they need to take in learning.

Pupils' enjoyment of school and attendance are excellent. They are cooperative and mature and exhibit good behaviour and politeness. They develop not only a confidence in learning but also a confidence in themselves as young people. This is because of the very good relationships that staff forge with them and with their parents. The extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and music and including a residential visit, add to their all-round physical, social and emotional development and to their excellent understanding of healthy and safe living.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although there is room for further growth in pupils' spiritual development. Curriculum plans, for example, do not often identify such opportunities. The school also recognises that spirituality can be developed further in acts of worship. Profitably, it has just begun to take pupils' views of worship into account in the worship committee, and these pupils have made some good suggestions. Pupils have a satisfactory range of responsibilities. The school council has had some success in taking on responsibility but there is scope for it to become more active.

Pupils enjoy their lessons, typically saying, 'Our teachers are inventive and lessons are fun.' Good assessment arrangements and up-to-date marking ensure that lesson planning is well informed and provides accurately for the pupils' next steps in learning. Thoughtfully planned and prepared lessons assist pupils' good learning attitudes and interest. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils watched a video clip of the 'Railway Children' as a stimulus to poetry writing which brought creditable results. In some lessons, however, teachers supply too much information and do not keep pupils on their toes enough by drawing out their understanding and knowledge through challenging questioning. In the activities that follow there is sometimes an overuse of worksheets, particularly in religious education (RE) and science, which do not extend pupils' own writing skills and thinking processes enough.

Governors are very supportive of the school. Good use is made of their individual expertise, for example, seeing through a recent building project and in addressing the 'Every Child Matters' agenda, both of which have been managed successfully. Some are active through their individual links with subject leaders; these relationships give them good insight into the curriculum, standards and pupils' progress. Their keenness to be more effective as the critical friend and to be in a better position to contribute to the school development plan is demonstrated in their re-structuring plans, which are being wisely overseen with professional advice.

Child protection procedures are good. Staff are kept well informed about such matters, which results in the school being an alert and safe community where all pupils are known well. Care arrangements are good. Assessment and record keeping are thorough. These contribute to the good progress that pupils make because activities are well matched to pupils' capabilities. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress. A good start has been made in providing more effectively for gifted and talented pupils and this includes specially arranged sessions for them. The provision for these pupils is especially strong in music and sport and supports their good achievements.

This is a school that has strong links with the community, including the church, and with parents. The community strongly supported the successful efforts to fund building improvements. The vast majority of parents think highly of the school's efforts for their children, applaud its family atmosphere and find it to be very approachable. A few feel that communication, while recognising the improvements already made, could be improved further, with better use of electronic means and longer notice of events. There is some justification for this view. Phrases from parents' comments such as the school being 'a hidden gem' and 'children thriving' testify to the good progress made and the strong, caring ethos. One parent comments, 'I feel privileged to have children at such a wonderful school.' The school has good capacity to improve further and build on its success. Its motto, 'Faith in the Future', captures aptly its vision for pupils as life-long learners, with Christian values at its heart. It is well on its way to meeting this aim.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision for the school's youngest pupils is good. The curriculum is well planned and the teaching is good, with effective links between different areas of learning. Reception children hunted in the garden for coloured objects as a prelude to a counting activity to develop an understanding of the terms 'most' or 'least' as each counted their total of objects found. There is a careful balance between child-initiated activities and those directed for them. Very good links with parents ensure that the preparation for school is good so that pupils settle in well. Attainment on entry in most years is above the level expected. The children make good progress

and reach above the expectations set out for pupils for the end of the Reception year. They are well cared for on a difficult site that restricts the possibilities for outside play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the curriculum to make better links between subjects and in so doing identify more clearly aspects of learning that could promote pupils' spiritual development.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to plan investigations for themselves in science and reduce the use of worksheets in recording work.

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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?	2
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	1
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	1
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	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

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit and meeting you all. Your school is a good one with some outstanding features and you make good progress. The standards that you reach are much higher than in most schools. You make an effective contribution to your school by your politeness and cooperation with staff and through your hard work and enthusiasm in lessons. Your enjoyment of school and attendance are excellent. You really like your lessons and work hard in them. You are developing well as young people and are cultivating a range of interests. I really enjoyed your singing and wished that I could have had time to hear the choir and orchestra. You have an excellent understanding of how to live safely and healthily and you participate very well in the extra-curricular activities. You appreciate the way that your teachers make the lessons interesting for you.

- The school is well led by your headteacher and the staff work effectively as a team to make your daily life in school something you look forward to. You are well cared for and the staff and governors make sure that the school is a safe place for you. The staff provide an interesting curriculum for you but I have asked them to:
 - increase the opportunities for you to organise your own investigations in science;
 - reduce the number of worksheets in some classes so that you are challenged more effectively;
 - make better links between subjects so that you develop an even better understanding of your work and can be even more reflective on what you do in your lessons.

I wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to work hard and achieve your ambitions.



11 September 2007

Dear Children,

**Inspection of Bidborough CE VC Primary School, Bidborough, Kent TN3
OUE**

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- make better links between subjects so that you develop an even better understanding of your work and can be even more reflective on what you do in your lessons.

I wish you well for the future and hope that you will continue to work hard and achieve your ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector