

St Barnabas' Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123211
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314541
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Schenk HMI

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stephen Brown
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	Hart Street Oxford OX2 6BN
Telephone number	01865 557178
Fax number	01865 516955

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

St Barnabas' is an average sized primary school, serving a diverse area. About half its pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and around a quarter speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than in most schools. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities is below the national figure, though the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. The turnover of pupils is relatively high: around 10% come to the school or leave at other than the normal times during each year. Many of these come from abroad, with families who are in Oxford for a short time. The school's age range was extended to 11 in September 2003; prior to that it was a First School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'St Barnabas is a lovely community school with a broad mix of children. We feel that there is a great balance between supporting their educational development and taking a more holistic approach to the child's school life'. These comments from parents are typical of the very positive response to a questionnaire that was sent out at the time of the inspection. They encapsulate well what it is that makes St Barnabas a good school.

The holistic approach to the child's school life is evident in the broad curriculum, in which music plays an important part, that gives the pupils a good range of interesting things to learn about. Their personal development is good and in particular, the school makes an outstanding contribution to their international understanding and their ecological awareness.

Their educational development is well supported and they are now attaining high standards by the time that they leave in English, mathematics and science, that show that they have made good overall progress in their time at the school. There is, however, some variation in the progress made in different age groups: it is good in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, and particularly good in Years 5 and 6, but in Key Stage 1 it is currently no more than satisfactory. The teachers in Key Stage 1 are actively exploring ways of building more effectively on the children's achievements in the Foundation Stage.

The mix of children is very broad. Overall standards on entry are broadly average in most respects, but this bland statement masks significant variations. In each class, there is a wide range both in terms of attainment and in terms of proficiency in English. Teachers cope well with the challenging task of meeting the diverse needs of their pupils. They give good support to lower attaining pupils and to those who are at an early stage of learning English. In some but not all classes, particularly good use is made of day-to-day assessment and marking to help pupils to know how they can improve and higher attaining pupils are given appropriate challenges. There are some opportunities through the broad curriculum for the particular gifts and talents of individual pupils to be encouraged, but this provision is not yet sufficiently widespread. While behaviour is generally good, there are a few pupils who have considerable difficulties in controlling their emotions and the school needs to ensure that appropriate support is in place for all of them.

The headteacher's consensual style of leadership is effective in bringing about improvement. Over the last few years, the staff have worked together well to raise standards in mathematics and science. Their success in these ventures shows that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. Governors play an active role and give support and challenge. The links with parents are particularly strong, enabling the school to make good use of the varied talents of parents, who are keen to be involved and eager to make their views known.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The unit for nursery and reception age children is a colourful and lively area where children thrive. It is well managed, ensuring good organisation and teamwork. Children enter with a diverse range of skills. For many, English is not their first language. Most make good progress so that, by the time they leave the reception class, they achieve levels expected for their age. Even the youngest and most reluctant newcomer settles quickly because of the warm inviting environment, positive adult support and clear expectations. As a result, personal development

is good. Children enjoy the range of activities on offer and respond well to regular routines, which are shared with parents to involve them in their children's learning. Teaching is good. Individual needs are recognised and efforts valued. Staff monitor how well children do and track their progress. This, together with a structured approach to early literacy skills, prepares them well for the next stage of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress in Key Stage 1.
- Spread the good practice in assessment and marking more widely so that all pupils have a clearer understanding of what they need to do in order to improve.
- Make sure that higher attaining pupils are consistently given sufficient challenge, and that pupils with particular gifts and talents are all enabled to flourish.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the school as a whole, pupils' achievement is good. When children first come to the school at around the age of three or four they vary widely in their skills, though in most respects overall attainment is around average. However, in communication, language and literacy and in some aspects of personal development there are many whose skills are below those normally expected for their age. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, reaching standards by the age of seven that are broadly average in reading and writing and a little better in mathematics. They make good progress in Key Stage 2, and particularly in Years 5 and 6. In 2007, Year 6 pupils reached high standards in English, where more than two thirds reached the higher level, and in mathematics and science, where around three fifths reached it.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because their needs are carefully assessed at an early stage, enabling them to receive the support that they need. Throughout the age range, some pupils come to the school at an early stage of learning English. They make good progress and all pupils who speak English as an additional language benefit from the school's positive attitude to bilingualism.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. They recognise cultural diversity and are aware of the needs of others. A particular feature of the school is the way in which the pupils' global understanding is developed through their experience of being part of a harmonious, international community.

The spontaneous comment of a pupil in the playground, 'I like this school because it makes learning fun', reflects pupils' enjoyment. The school's strong and sustained emphasis on ecological awareness has a very positive effect on personal development and enables pupils to make an outstanding contribution to the school and to the wider community. The school has recently been awarded a Green Flag for its ecological activities. Pupils accept responsibilities willingly. The elected School Council engage in lively discussion and is chaired by a pupil with confidence and flair. It allows pupils to express opinions and is instrumental in making improvements. This, together with good academic standards, prepares pupils well for future involvement in the world of work and decision-making. Behaviour is good and attendance is

around average. Pupils interact well during playtimes and in lessons. They benefit from taking part in performances, raising self-esteem and building confidence. Pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle. Through lessons and assemblies, they learn about how to remain safe. They feel secure in the school and are good at offering support to each other if there is a problem.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are imaginatively planned to appeal to the pupils' interests and to engage them successfully in their learning. The teachers' planning always ensures that lower attaining pupils are given sufficient support and sometimes includes ways of giving extra challenge to higher attaining pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 5 pupils were asked to devise their own number sequences, giving higher attainers the opportunity to be adventurous and to challenge each other. Lessons have clear learning objectives and proceed at a good pace. Marking in books is always encouraging and sometimes gives pupils a clear indication of what they need to do in order to improve.

Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution, supporting teachers and taking the lead in some lessons. They are particularly helpful in giving support to lower attaining pupils and those at an early stage of learning English, who also benefit from additional teaching by a member of the Ethnic Minority Advisory Service.

Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are being increasingly involved in assessing their own progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A well-planned curriculum provides a broad range of interesting activities, which make good use of the rich locality and of parental expertise. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn French in school and Key Stage 2 pupils have the opportunity to learn several languages, including German, Mandarin and Latin, through after-school clubs run by parents. Many pupils are able to develop their musical talents through instrumental tuition and by taking part in the choir and the orchestra. A range of clubs run by staff and parents develop sporting and other skills. There is some provision for gifted and talented pupils, but because they are not systematically identified, it is difficult to match this provision to their needs.

There is good provision for literacy and numeracy. Practical activities, especially in science, make learning fun and strengthen understanding. There are effective links between subjects, especially using information and communication technology so pupils can practise skills. For example, when learning about the Tudors, pupils used research from books and websites to create interesting and colourful Powerpoint presentations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's caring ethos creates a welcoming and harmonious atmosphere where relationships are valued and pupils feel safe and comfortable. New pupils and their parents speak highly of the warm welcome they receive. One Year 6 pupil who had recently come to the school speaking

very little English said, 'In this school the welcome is nice because they are used to lots of new people from other countries'.

The school has effective ways of encouraging good behaviour and pupils respond well to the rewards they are given and are aware of the sanctions. However, there are a small number of pupils who sometimes show challenging behaviour, and may require further support. Regular checks are carried out to ensure pupils remain safe. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle, which has an impact on the choices pupils make.

There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those who speak English as an additional language. There are good systems for judging how well pupils are doing, especially for lower attainers, which results in a suitable level of support. However, the school has yet to extend this practice to track higher attainers' progress more closely.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's quietly determined approach has brought about a common sense of purpose among staff, parents and governors, who describe her as 'yearning for success'. She has brought about important changes since the last inspection. The increased focus on achievement as well as enjoyment has improved standards while maintaining the distinctive ethos of the school that parents value so highly. She is well supported by a senior management team that is growing in strength.

Systems are in place for including all staff in discussions about where the school needs to improve and how it should do it. The process of self-evaluation, while sometimes too modest in its judgements, identifies appropriate areas for further development. Through the experience the governors bring, and the organisation of their work, they have a clear picture of the strengths of the school, what it has achieved and where it needs 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?	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	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?	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	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

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

10 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Barnabas' Church of England Aided Primary School, Oxford, OX2 6BN

Thank you for your welcome when we came to your school recently. We are particularly grateful to the members of the School Council for allowing us to observe a meeting, to the Year 6 pupils who gave up some of their lunch-time to tell me about the school, and to those of you who talked to us in the playground, in lessons and while we were having our lunch.

We think that you go to a good school that helps you to make good progress in your learning and in your personal development. We are impressed by the way you are developing your international understanding and your ecological awareness. We think that some of your teachers are particularly good at helping you to know what you need to do to improve and at giving you all tasks that are not too easy and not too difficult.

Your headteacher and governors are always on the lookout for ways of making the school even better. Before we left, we talked to them and asked them to do three things. Firstly, we want those of you in Years 1 and 2 to make a bit more progress in your reading, writing and mathematics, building on what you have already achieved in the Foundation Stage. Secondly, we would like all your teachers to let you know what to do to get to the next stage in your learning. Thirdly, we want your teachers to be sure that they know what things you are really good at, so that they can give you some extra challenges to make you even better.

With best wishes

Christopher Schenk

Her Majesty's Inspector