

Berrow Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123807
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	314725
Inspection dates	4–5 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Geoff Burgess

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	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrea Johnstone
Headteacher	Peter Yardley
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Rugosa Drive Berrow Burnham-on-Sea TA8 2LJ
Telephone number	01278 783614
Fax number	01278 783134

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This medium-sized school is situated in the Somerset coastal village of Berrow. The number on roll has decreased significantly in recent years. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than usual. In most years, children start school with average standards in most areas of learning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It ensures that its pupils are happy, healthy, fit and safe, and that they achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Its overall provision is sound and pupils make satisfactory progress through the school. However, a significant number of parents are concerned about a deterioration in the fortunes of the school in recent years. This is shown by the rise in the numbers of pupils moving to other schools and the dramatic fall in numbers joining in the Reception class. Typically, parents felt that the school has 'lost its sparkle' and 'needs a shot in the arm'. Another said that, 'Something needs to dramatically change at this school to ensure a future for the better'.

Inspectors found that elements of leadership and management are weak, notably a lack of clear direction and of follow-through on initiatives by the headteacher, and poor communications. However, through the efforts of the whole school community, the school provides an adequate education so that overall leadership and management are satisfactory. One consequence of a lack of clear direction has been the fact that most curriculum and other leaders have not had the opportunity, resources or time to make a difference in their subjects. However, recent initiatives instigated by the local authority and run by senior managers have shown that, given the chance, staff are more than capable of moving the school forward. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The relatively small group of children in the Foundation Stage are enjoying being in school and are well on the way to achieving their early learning goals. Frequent changes in staffing have disrupted the development of teaching and learning in recent years, but teaching among the current staff team is never less than satisfactory and in some classes good. Thanks to this, pupils' recent achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is well organised and, with the help of capable teaching assistants, these pupils do equally as well as their classmates. Key features in pupils' learning are their good behaviour and attitudes to work which mean that lessons are calm and busy.

Staff know all pupils very well and take good care of them while they are in their charge. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure their safety but a lack of clarity, together with sometimes poor communications, means that parents are not always happy with the way situations are dealt with. Recent arrangements for improving academic guidance have not yet had time to show how effective they will be in improving achievement.

The past few years have seen substantial improvements in the school's facilities and accommodation but this is not yet fully reflected in the quality of the working and learning environment. Several areas are humdrum and not very interesting for children, others underused and a little untidy. Few reflect a curriculum that is in any way out of the ordinary or celebrate pupils' enthusiasm for the things they are doing. Efforts made to enrich the curriculum in recent years have had some success, but inspectors agree that the school does indeed need 'a shot in the arm' in this area.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The relatively small number of Foundation Stage children have the use of inside and outside areas, well equipped for two classes. The extra space, good levels of adult help and a good

variety of experiences covering each of the areas of learning mean that children's introduction to school life is happy and positive. Excited boys and girls were very keen to share their delicious baked potatoes with inspectors and showed how good their language skills and personal development are in the process. Parents of children in the Reception class are happy with their progress and the care given.

What the school should do to improve further

- promote high quality of care and education by setting clear direction and empowering all staff to carry out their responsibilities to the best of their abilities
- improve achievement by ensuring all teaching is consistently good throughout the school
- develop and enrich the learning environment by providing activities that energise and challenge pupils, by celebrating pupils' work, and by making the best use of the school's facilities.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall standards, as shown by national test results in Year 6, have been above average for the past six years. The school achieved its best ever results in 2007, mainly because of a big improvement in mathematics. Over the years, national test results in Year 2 have been above average, and usually well above, and in 2006, they were exceptionally high in all subjects. However, a year group with higher levels of LDD saw standards fall below average in mathematics in 2007. Overall standards remained above average. The school's records and pupils' current work show that above average standards have been sustained. The school's targets for this year also reflect the above picture.

Achievement, as shown by the value added by the school between Years 2 and 6, was close to the national mean from 2004 to 2007, with differing strengths and weaknesses in each year. The school's records show that, with satisfactory teaching, pupils are currently making satisfactory progress throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development is a strength of the school and a key reason why the school remains a harmonious community. Parents recognise the hard work done by teachers to help their children to enjoy school. Attendance has improved slightly since last year but it remains a little below average. Behaviour is good, with some being exemplary. Pupils move about the school sensibly, showing consideration for others. Older pupils enjoy arranging activities such as parachute games for younger ones, participating in local music festivals, and carol singing for elderly residents. School councillors are beginning to develop leadership skills as they seek the views of other pupils on how to improve the school. Pupils are willing to explore their own values and beliefs and enjoy the challenge of thinking about wider issues such as climate change. Multicultural development is good, as shown by children and their families hosting a choir from Africa which strengthened links with the children the school sponsors. . Even the youngest pupils know how important it is to eat a healthy diet and keep themselves fit and active. By

Year 6, most pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology that will help them to benefit from the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school's solid track record in ensuring that pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning is a good indicator that teaching is satisfactory. This was backed up by lessons observed during the inspection that were characterised by calm, purposeful teaching making good use of available resources such as the interactive whiteboards. No time is lost in managing behaviour or keeping pupils on task, and pupils' good attitudes and willingness to contribute and to try make a strong contribution to their learning. Teaching assistants play an important role in working with groups. Teachers are making increasing use of assessment information to set targets and match and modify work but the quality of marking is variable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils acquire skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy their work in science. All other subjects are covered appropriately and the school has begun to work on modifying the curriculum to make activities more relevant and exciting for Berrow pupils. The school's partnership with the local sports specialist school has contributed well to developments, as has the teaching of French and German. A good range of enrichment activities, including clubs, visits and residential trips, contribute well to raising pupils' social skills and self-esteem. However, insufficient use is made of cross-curricular links, including the use of basic skills in other subjects so that pupils can develop these skills in different contexts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal welfare needs are well known by all adults in the school and appropriate safeguarding procedures are in place. Effectively written individual education plans are used well to support pupils with LDD. Guidance for pupils' academic progress is improving. Assessment data had been collected for some time but was insufficiently analysed. It is now being evaluated effectively, with the deputy headteacher in the lead. Staff are increasingly adept at evaluation, its use in target setting and in pupils' evaluation of their own progress, but the process is at an early stage of development. Pupils benefit from good liaison with the secondary school and the 'official friend' scheme for newly arrived pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Over the years, the school has made it possible for generations of pupils to move on to secondary school well prepared with good personal, literacy and numeracy skills. This continues, which indicates that essentially, leadership and management are satisfactory. This judgement, and

other judgements about the quality of provision, tallies with the school's view which would appear to show the accuracy of the school's view of itself as satisfactory. However, the acceptance of this also indicates low expectations and a lack of ambition in the top leadership. Despite the efforts of senior staff, an ethos of accepting mediocrity and avoiding issues and challenges has developed. This forms the core of the concerns of many in the school community about the decline in the school's reputation in the local community.

The local authority has ensured that a programme of monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress is in place, and senior teachers are now using this information to identify successes and areas for improvement. However, staff have not been encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and several have had little opportunity to work on and improve provision in their areas of responsibility. The governing body has seen many changes of personnel but, under the guidance of the long serving chair, it has done much to try to move the school forward recently.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Berrow CE Primary School, Burnham-on-Sea, TA8 2LJ

Mrs Case, Mr Bate and I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome during our short stay at your school. We particularly enjoyed sharing baked potatoes with the children in the Reception class. They were delicious. We think your school is satisfactory, but we also think that if everyone works very hard, it could be much better in a short time.

We found these good things:

- you behave well, enjoy learning, work hard and do your best
- you are good at reading, writing, mathematics and science
- your teachers and helpers work hard to help you learn
- they arrange a good range of extra activities for you to enjoy
- you know you are safe and that there is always someone to turn to
- we know you appreciate all the grown-ups do to make sure your time in school is as happy as possible.

To make things better, this is what we have asked your school to do now:

- make sure all staff know what needs to be done to make things better and make it possible for everyone to do their best
- help you to achieve as well as you can by ensuring all teaching is as good as the best
- make the school a great place to learn in by giving you even more exciting things to do, displaying a lot more of the lovely work you do, and making the most of all the school's facilities.

You can help, too, by continuing to work hard and do your best.

Again, thank you for all you do to make your school as good as it is. It was a pleasure for us to share it with you for a short time.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Burgess Lead Inspector

6 December 2007

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Lead Inspector