

Bardwell Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 124687 |
| Local Authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 315019 |
| Inspection dates | 25–26 November 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Alison Pangbourne |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 58 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 0 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Will Williamson |
| Headteacher | Mrs Caroline Clarke |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 September 2004 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | School Lane Bardwell Bury St. Edmunds Suffolk IP31 1AD |
| Telephone number | 01359250854 |

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Age group | 4–9 |
| Inspection dates | 25–26 November 2008 |
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Fax number

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Age group 4-9

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small First school. There are significantly more boys than girls. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for a free school meal is average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have behavioural, social or emotional difficulties or specific learning difficulties. When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), their attainment varies each year but it is a little below what is expected for their age, although this is not the case for all children. The school has recently gained the Active Mark award.

Key for inspection grades

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| 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 is emerging from an unsettled period. Now, improvements are under way closely guided by the clear vision of the headteacher and the new chair of governors. Many governors are recent appointments and they are developing their roles, particularly in monitoring the work of the school. Most parents recognise that the school is working to address areas of weakness and are satisfied with the school, although some rightly think that the older pupils should do better.

Year groups are very small and assessment results for one pupil can cause attainment to vary from year to year. There is a high proportion of pupils who need extra help with reading, writing and mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory overall. However, progress is uneven across the school. Children in the EYFS and in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and achieve well from what for some is a low starting point. Over recent years, attainment at the end of Year 2 has been broadly average. Good teaching, where teachers make learning fun, contributes to their good achievement. In Years 3 and 4, progress slows and pupils do not build sufficiently on their previous learning. Assessments at the end of Year 4 show that pupils' attainment is broadly as expected for their age. Here, teaching lacks sparkle and challenge, the pace is slower and pupils' achievement is only satisfactory.

The school recognises that standards and achievement are not sufficiently high, particularly for the older pupils. A thorough tracking system is in place and, although most staff have a much clearer picture about how well each pupil is doing and put in measures to support any who are falling behind, this is not yet consistent throughout the school. Staff have an improved understanding about the standards that pupils are expected to reach. As a result, pupils are beginning to do better.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, reflecting the caring ethos of the school. Consequently, pupils are polite and their behaviour is good. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance. Older pupils take their roles as 'buddies' and 'playground friends' seriously. They receive good pastoral support so they grow in confidence and take on a range of responsibilities. They have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy.

A range of visits and visitors enriches the satisfactory curriculum. Pupils enjoy an unusually wide range of extra-curricular activities for such a small school. Pupils are beginning to gain an understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to learn next. They have their own targets but some of them are written in language that is not easily understood by the pupils, so they are not always sufficiently clear about how to improve. Subject leaders fulfil their roles satisfactorily but they are developing their monitoring and evaluating skills so that they can bring about more improvements. Sound leadership and management, based on accurate school self-evaluation have resulted in improvements since the previous inspection and indications are that the school has a sound capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Parents praise the start their children receive in the EYFS. One wrote, 'My daughter is very happy and skips to school each day!' The Reception class includes a few pupils in Year 1, and staff work hard to ensure that the needs of all children are met. Children make good progress

through the Reception year, from what for some is a low starting point. By the time they transfer to Year 1, most have reached the goals set for them nationally. The new initiatives that have been introduced in the rest of the school are also in place in the EYFS and staff have an increasing understanding of what each child knows, what they need to learn next and how best to develop their skills. Children are cared for well and all welfare requirements are met.

Children achieve well because the quality of teaching is good and adults make learning interesting. For example, children were intrigued to predict what might happen to a plastic bear encased in ice. The children behave well because adults make their expectations clear. They work well independently. Opportunities for them to develop their skills outdoors are restricted. Work is due to begin shortly to improve the outdoor area so that it can be used more effectively as an integral part of the classroom. Good leadership of the EYFS means that the requirements of the new national EYFS curriculum are met and that activities are closely matched to the needs of the children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve progress and raise standards for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and ensure that all lessons come up to that of the best.
- Improve the leadership skills of subject leaders so that they have a clearer understanding of standards and teaching in their subjects.
- Ensure that the governing body develops a good understanding of its roles and responsibilities in monitoring the work of the school.
- Embed the new initiatives, such as the tracking of pupils' progress, the raising of teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils' understanding of their own targets, consistently throughout the school.

A small proportion of the 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

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those who need extra help to learn, make good progress and achieve well. The school's data shows that progress in Years 3 and 4 has been unsatisfactory but is now broadly satisfactory for all pupils although is still not as good as it should be for the older pupils. Assessments at the end of Year 2 show that attainment has improved over the last two years and is broadly average. In the Key Stage 1 test results for 2008, attainment was average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion who did better than this was similar to the national expectations and was above average in reading and mathematics and a little below in writing. This year standards are on course to be above average. This improvement is because teachers have a better understanding of how well pupils are doing and they quickly spot any who are falling behind and address their needs. However, at Key Stage 2, pupils do not build sufficiently on what they already know so that by the end of Year 4, standards are still only average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards look likely to be similar this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors. Their behaviour is good and they treat one another with kindness and respect. The small number of pupils who find it more difficult to manage their behaviour are supported well. They know that the school's 'traffic light' system, where they lose special privileges for misbehaviour, helps them to meet the school's high expectations of behaviour. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and school councillors take their roles seriously. They become tolerant and caring individuals because of their good understanding of the range of cultures in society. They show good care for others within the school community. Over half the pupils use the 'Walking Bus' to come to school and this contributes positively to their good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. They grow their own vegetables and enjoy eating them for lunch. They say they really enjoy their lessons, especially art and history. Incidents of bullying and racism are rare. Pupils are building a sound foundation for later life and the next stage of their education. They plan and organise their own fund raising activities, such as the recent 'Wear your pyjamas and a crazy hat to school' day and a tabletop sale.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are strengths in teaching but practice is inconsistent. In lessons for pupils in Years 1 and 2, expectations are high and staff use challenging questions to extend learning. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and behaviour is managed well. Different tasks are set according to pupils' level of attainment. Tasks are planned to interest the pupils, for example, acting out the Christmas story as a motivator for work in literacy. In Years 3 and 4, pace is slow, teaching lacks excitement to motivate the pupils and tasks lack challenge. This limits their rate of progress. Sometimes, support staff are not used effectively during whole class sessions, sitting listening rather than taking an active role. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. However, although pupils have targets in their books to help them improve, they are not always familiar with them and teachers do not regularly refer to them in lessons or in their marking. Consequently, pupils are not always sure what they have done well and what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is planned appropriately to meet the needs of pupils in mixed age classes. Links are developing satisfactorily between different subjects to make learning more meaningful. A sound personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to understand feelings and to develop social skills. The wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum and gives pupils good opportunities to develop skills such as filmmaking and drama. Older pupils learn to speak French and to play the guitar. Art has a high profile, and work on display is of good quality. Visits and visitors support work in areas such as personal safety and cultural development. Parents particularly enjoy the 'Share' project, where they join their children in school for activities, such as in the recent event based on artwork on a nativity theme. Pupils make satisfactory use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning but opportunities to develop this further across the curriculum are not always identified. Gifted and talented pupils say they enjoy the 'master classes' given by the headteacher but the provision for these pupils is not fully developed.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is a safe environment and careful attention is paid to safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and child protection. The school works closely with specialist agencies to support the needs of individual pupils and those who find it hard to learn so that they receive suitable help. The school uses an appropriate range of support programmes to help these pupils. Many of these strategies are led by support staff, who complete records appropriately to show how well pupils are doing. They evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies with the headteacher to ensure that they meet pupils' needs. This contributes positively to their progress. Recently introduced tracking systems mean that pupils' progress is now monitored more carefully to ensure that all pupils are making the expected progress. These have not been in place for long enough to have a positive impact on standards and their use is inconsistent across the school. Staff now meet more regularly to discuss where pupils are in relation to their age and to set targets and strategies to support them. Pupils are gaining an understanding of their own learning but this is not yet developed consistently across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the improvement of the school. The chair of governors supports her in this and, together, they have introduced a good plan for raising attainment that is now in progress. They are committed to improvement and are working hard to make up for lost time, monitoring the effectiveness of new initiatives. Many governors are recently appointed and are gaining an understanding of their roles and how to work as a team. They are beginning to monitor the work of the school and ask challenging questions. Their most recent success has been the redevelopment of the playground to provide an attractive environment. The headteacher regularly monitors the quality of teaching, and feedback is given to help this to improve. Subject leaders are developing their roles, but there are currently too few opportunities for them to gain a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. The school promotes community cohesion well by actively fostering a strong sense of community, both within the school and outside. It helps pupils to gain a good appreciation of people's different customs and beliefs, both in the United Kingdom and across the world.

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

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| 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

| | |
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| 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 capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 2 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 2 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 2 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 3 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 2 |
| 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 |

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Bardwell CE Primary School, Bardwell, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 1AD

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. I would like to tell you what I found out.

You told me that you like coming to school and that everyone is friendly. I agree with you. You said that you liked art and history and I admired the beautiful artwork on display. You worked hard with your parents on the 'Share project' to make your nativity models. You know how to keep fit and healthy and it was good to hear that so many of you come to school on the 'walking bus'. All the grownups look after you well. Those of you who find learning hard get plenty of help. The children in Class 1 and Class 2 make good progress and do as well, and sometimes better, than most children of your age. This is because teachers make learning interesting and help you to enjoy your lessons. At the moment, children in Class 3 are not doing quite as well but the school has introduced lots of new things to help your teachers spot if you are falling behind. I thought that your behaviour was good and you enjoy lots of extra-curricular activities. You are lucky to have so many to choose from. Mrs Clarke and the governors work hard to make your school a happy place to be.

I have asked Mrs Clarke and the teachers to help children in Class 3 do as well as those in the rest of the school by making their lessons more interesting. You can help by continuing to try as hard as you can. Your teachers have lots of subjects to look after and I have asked if they can visit you in your classes to see how you are getting on in each subject. Most of the governors who help Mrs Clarke manage the school are new and they are still learning how to do this. Since Mrs Clarke came back after having her baby, lots of new things have started for the teachers to do, so I have asked if all these new things can happen in every class to help you all do as well as you can.

I hope you carry on enjoying your time at Bardwell School and do well in your next school.

Best wishes

Alison Pangbourne

Lead inspector