

Bentley CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124754
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315044
Inspection date	23 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Nelson

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	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr C Cripps
Headteacher	Mr J McSorley
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2004
School address	Church Road Bentley Ipswich IP9 2BT
Telephone number	01473310253
Fax number	01473313152

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small school serves the village of Bentley and surrounding areas. Very few children are known to be eligible for free school meals and the proportion of children who need extra help with their learning is well below that found in most schools. Most of the children are from White British families. There are no children at the early stages of learning English. Most children have had some formal pre-school experiences before joining the Reception class. Their skills and knowledge on starting school vary from year to year but are generally around those expected of this age. The headteacher is in the third year of his headship and has a class teaching commitment of three days a week. The school has just had extensive building work completed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has a warm and welcoming atmosphere that is much appreciated by parents and their children. It provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Children say they like the individual attention the staff give them because of the small size of the school. This individual attention results in children's exceptional personal development. They demonstrate excellent social skills and say they thoroughly relish school. Children's enjoyment of school is largely due to the way staff take good care of them and to the good range of activities they enjoy in lessons and after school. These have a particularly strong impact on children's personal development, equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to make safe decisions and healthy choices.

The headteacher's good leadership and clear vision for developing the school has led to extensive improvements to the building to enhance the learning environment and remove the need for temporary classrooms. However, the focus on improving the building has resulted in leaders and managers not being rigorous enough in checking the achievement of children's academic development or in using the priorities from the school's self-evaluation to set measurable targets in the school development plan. As a result, while children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress and exceed the expectations for their age, the achievement of children at Key Stage 2 is only satisfactory. The excellent start children get in the first class results in standards that are usually well above average by Year 2, but at Key Stage 2 standards vary from year to year depending on the children's starting points. The current Year 6 are on track to attain their targets and gain above average standards in the national tests, which would show satisfactory achievement overall.

The reason for the inconsistent rates of achievement is that teaching ranges from satisfactory at Key Stage 2 to outstanding at Foundation Stage. At its most effective, teaching caters exceptionally well for the children in the mixed Reception and Key Stage 1 class so that they are well engaged and make rapid progress in their personal and academic development. However, marking of older children's work does not tell them clearly what they need to do to move their learning on.

Good governance and satisfactory leadership and management have resulted in good improvements since the last inspection. This, and the effective management of the recent building programme, show the school is well placed to improve in the future.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children in the Foundation Stage get an excellent start to their schooling and make exceptionally good progress. This is because teaching is particularly effective in ensuring that these youngest children get appropriate activities to cover all the required areas of learning. They have an excellent balance between teacher directed and self-chosen activities and they use the recently developed outside area very effectively. Teaching is extremely effective in planning learning opportunities to match children's needs so that most exceed the expectations of their age by the time they enter Year 1. The small size of the class ensures that all children receive individual attention so that they do well. The excellent management of the Foundation Stage and the school's welcoming ethos does much to ensure children start school in the right frame of mind. As one parent put it, 'The school welcomes and invites all family members, including the

youngest, which means they already feel part of the school before they join Reception.' As a result, their personal, social and emotional development is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour with which the school checks how well children are learning so that achievement is accelerated beyond the satisfactory.
- Ensure that the targets in the school development plan are very specific and measurable, based on rigorous school self-evaluation.
- Ensure that teachers' marking of children's work tells them clearly what they need to do next to move on in their learning.

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

Children's excellent grounding benefits their learning when they enter Year 1. They make good progress through Years 1 and 2 so that standards in recent years have been above average in the national tests at Year 2. Progress through Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory although standards have varied over the years from exceptionally low to exceptionally high in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Children with additional learning needs who do not gain the expected level 2 at Year 2 make good progress by Year 6 and make up lost ground effectively. However, some of those who reach or exceed the expected standards at Year 2 make only satisfactory progress by Year 6 to reach the expected level 4 because they are not being challenged enough to gain the higher levels. This is due to inconsistencies in teaching and a lack of rigour in checking how well children are doing. There is no obvious difference in the rate of progress made by boys and girls or children of different ethnic backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Children thoroughly enjoy school as shown by their exceptionally good behaviour, attitudes and attendance. They say there is no bullying, and the lack of playground incidents indicates that they play with an awareness of the needs of others in a safe and sensible way. Older children happily support younger ones and there are many opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school, including being elected to the school council. Children have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and they speak very enthusiastically about their enjoyment of physical education and swimming lessons. They have ample opportunities to learn about other countries and cultures through lessons in geography and religious education and through links with a school in San Salvador. The school has extensive grounds that have been developed to encourage children to seek quiet corners where they can reflect on and appreciate the natural world. The school's focus on working and playing together enhances children's social skills exceptionally well and helps to prepare them effectively for the next stage of schooling and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, teachers manage classes very effectively so that no time is lost through disruption, and lessons are well paced. At times however, the teachers spend too long talking rather than moving the children on to activities, which is the way they say they like to learn. The effective use of information and communication technology, including interactive whiteboards, enlivens learning and holds children's attention well. Teaching assistants effectively support children, enabling teachers to split classes into groups for parts of lessons. Although teachers tell children what they are to learn in a lesson, the marking of work does not make clear what children need to do next to move on in their learning or how well they have achieved against the lesson's targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Throughout the school children say their lessons are mostly interesting and they enjoy the good range of after school clubs and activities. They like learning German and the enrichment that comes from visits to places of local interest and special events like the art day. The school makes very effective use of the extensive grounds including the garden and nature area. As one parent put it, 'The children enjoy taking part in a wide range of activities which help to educate the whole person.' Although the curriculum is good overall and helps to promote children's personal development and well-being very effectively, it has had less impact on their academic learning at Key Stage 2.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents speak very enthusiastically of the warm and welcoming atmosphere within the school which is the result of the very strong focus on pastoral care. One commented, 'The school is a kind, caring environment with a strong feeling of community,' echoing the views of others. As a result, children settle quickly into school routines and develop a maturity beyond their years. All the procedures to ensure children's safety and well-being are in place. Children who require extra help with their learning are supported well to help them make good progress. The school maintains strong links with other agencies like health workers, the emergency services, the local authority and neighbouring schools to ensure the welfare of the children. While the school has systems to check how well children are learning, these are not rigorous enough to highlight where progress could be better, particularly at Key Stage 2.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

All staff share the headteacher's clear vision for the future of the school and work very well as a team to maintain the caring ethos which leads to such excellent personal development of children. The headteacher has spent much of his management time since his appointment successfully overseeing the building improvements. This has resulted in a much-improved learning environment in line with the headteacher's aspirations for the school. However, the

focus on such a huge project has resulted in leaders not analysing effectively the information on how well children are learning in order to identify where this could be better. While school development planning is usefully arranged under the same headings as the self-evaluation form it is too general. It makes too little reference to the specific priorities identified through school self-evaluation. The governors have secure systems for seeing at first hand the work of the school and raising issues at governing body meetings.

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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?	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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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 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	1
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?	3
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?	3
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	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	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

24 April 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Bentley CEVC Primary School, Bentley, Ipswich, IP9 2BT

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and watching you work and play. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school.

We think your behaviour is excellent. You told us that you enjoy school and that your lessons are mostly interesting. The children in Reception do particularly well with their learning and make excellent progress, but progress is slower at Key Stage 2. We have asked the teachers to check more closely how well you are doing and to tell you exactly what you need to do to get better. The teachers plan a good range of interesting activities to help you to learn in lessons and after school.

All the staff look after you very well and encourage you to look after each other too. This means yours is a happy school and your excellent attendance shows how much you enjoy coming to it. While teaching is satisfactory overall, we think it could be better in Key Stage 2 and that this would help older pupils to make faster progress.

Your headteacher has been very busy recently with the building work that has resulted in the new classrooms. We have asked that he and the governors now take time to plan other improvements to your school to help you to learn even better. You can play your part by continuing to be well behaved and attentive in lessons and by continuing to work hard.

We wish you all well for the future.

Ian Nelson

Lead inspector