

Backwell Church of England Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109183
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	324920
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Grahame Sherfield HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Hellen
Headteacher	Alexander Bell
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 September 2005
School address	Church Lane Backwell Bristol BS48 3JJ
Telephone number	01275 462632
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited 11 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at key school documents, such as the development plan and the minutes of meetings of the governing body, and 103 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of the school's analysis of the decline in attainment and progress in English in 2008 and the impact of actions to address this
- whether teaching has improved since 2007 and how effectively it has an impact on learning
- the impact of the curriculum on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, particularly in writing
- the progress made in stabilising senior leadership, developing subject leaders and enhancing governors' awareness of their roles and responsibilities.

Information about the school

Backwell Church of England Junior School is of average size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportions with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average. Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties form the largest group with additional needs. Almost all pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. The headteacher took up his post in September 2007, following a period when the school had an acting headteacher.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where pupils enjoy their learning and feel very safe and secure. Their obvious enjoyment is reflected in their good levels of attendance. The headteacher and his staff have created a happy and caring school community where pupils do well in their work and develop more broadly as individuals. Parents are strongly supportive of the school. One wrote: 'I am looking forward to my two younger children starting there when they are older knowing it is such a good school.' Another praised the 'warm and friendly environment' and a third 'the committed teaching and management'. Inspectors fully agree with these views which are representative of most parents and carers.

Pupils achieve well and generally reach standards in their work that are significantly above average. The school's senior leaders have successfully enabled the staff to address a dip that occurred in standards in writing in 2008. Inspectors' observations and sampling of pupils' work, as well as the school's own data, indicate that pupils are on track to regain standards that are similar to the high standards in mathematics and reading by the end of Year 6 this year. The staff are very careful to check the progress of particular groups of pupils, such as higher or lower attainers, as well as individual children, in order to identify slower progress than might be expected at an early stage. This helps the teachers and other adults to plan appropriate action to address any problems. They are rightly intent on maintaining their efforts to raise standards in writing and to build on and consolidate the improvement in this area.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They enjoy their work and respond well to the good teaching they receive. Teachers plan varied activities which often catch pupils' interest and have been particularly successful in helping pupils to generate ideas and organise them effectively in their writing. The staff have introduced new approaches to help pupils to become more involved in assessing their own work and in identifying how they might improve. These are beginning to have an impact but are not yet fully established. The curriculum is having a good impact on the needs of the different groups of pupils, particularly through the successful approaches to improving pupils' writing which are being used in every class.

The headteacher provides good leadership and a clear and ambitious direction for the future development of the school. Governance is satisfactory and the governing body is in the process of further strengthening its role in school improvement. School

self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, resulting in clear and appropriate priorities for further development, as seen in the school's recent actions to raise standards and improve progress in writing. This has resulted in considerable success and demonstrates that the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more systematic use of the range of opportunities for writing across the subjects of the curriculum in order to accelerate progress in writing so that 90% of pupils reach Level 4 or better in the Year 6 national tests in 2010.
- Improve the quality of learning and the pace of progress by providing more opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and to identify for themselves ways in which it could be improved.
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in improving the school by developing its capacity to hold the school to account for its performance.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

Pupils achieve well in the classroom. As one pupil correctly observed, teachers 'make lessons interesting'. Pupils are actively engaged in their learning and this helps them to work hard and to enjoy most of their lessons. After disappointing test results in writing in 2008, the staff accurately identified the need to improve the progress in writing of higher and lower attaining pupils as well as boys. Progress is now good for all groups of pupils who are on track to reach standards that are likely to be well above average in the national tests this year. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making similar progress to their peers as their needs are clearly identified and appropriate support is provided. The very small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language also make good progress.

In 2008, despite the decline in writing, the proportion of pupils that attained expected standards in both English and mathematics was well above the provisional national data. Results in mathematics have been consistently high in recent years. Reading is also an established strength. The school was disappointed that the number of pupils who achieved the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics in 2008 was below what it had anticipated. Consequently, staff took robust action to stop the decline, ensuring that pupils' progress was tracked carefully, and the school is now working effectively to ensure that the large number of pupils expected to achieve the higher level this year are successful.

Pupils' concentration in lessons is very good. They get on very well with each other and with the adults in the school, and they say they feel very safe. They are confident that there is little or no bullying and that they know exactly what to do if an incident does occur. Pupils are very aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of taking plenty of exercise. This is reflected in the good take up of healthy school meals and high levels of involvement in sporting activities.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social and cultural development is good. They understand aspects of life in locations in Africa and India well through the school's good links. Pupils willingly take on a range of responsibilities and the school council provides an effective forum for their ideas. It ensures that pupils' views contribute to the school's development, for example in choosing which charities to support and the nature of themed days and weeks. Pupils' good basic skills and attitudes prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

There is compelling evidence in the school's monitoring records that teaching is improving. Work is now more consistently matched to pupils' needs and teachers are much more successful in helping pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers plan their lessons well to meet the needs of all the pupils. For example, they carefully design sequences of activities which enable pupils to build their understanding and skills systematically and make progress at a good pace. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and support staff make an effective contribution to the learning of individual pupils and of small groups, particularly in improving their writing. Relationships in the classrooms are good so that pupils feel confident when asking questions and contributing their own ideas. As one pupil said, teachers 'will always help you out when you have a problem'. Lessons often involve challenging and engaging activities which pupils relish. As a result, they are keen to learn, enjoy their work and maintain concentration very well. As one pupil put it, we have 'lots of hands-on experience, we don't just get told to sit down and write'. Pupils' work is carefully marked with clear indications of how to improve. Occasionally, teachers allow a little more time than an activity needs, which slows progress, or miss an

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

opportunity to press pupils to think further.

The school has good arrangements in place to track pupils' progress carefully through the year. Teachers' assessments are recorded centrally and form the starting point for detailed meetings between the headteacher, assessment leader and the class teachers about the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The data collected are used well to set challenging targets, reflecting adults' high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school has begun to give pupils opportunities to consider how well they are doing in their work and to think for themselves about how they might improve. This development is at an early stage and has not yet had its full impact on pupils' achievement.

The curriculum addresses the needs of pupils well. For example, the current whole-school focus on improving pupils' writing is well conceived and effective, and there are many opportunities for pupils to write in subjects other than English. However, these are not yet planned systematically across the school. Developing pupils' confidence, responsibility and enthusiasm is central to the work of the headteacher and his staff and this is reflected well in the daily life of the school. Transition arrangements into and out of the school are effective. Pupils are well cared for and supported in their personal development. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good and the right additional support is provided when needed. For example, staff respond well to pupils with particular needs by drawing up individual plans which are carefully tailored to their requirements. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and pupils appreciate various visits and visitors that support their work well. The good range of clubs and after school activities include various sports as well as unusual opportunities, such as a debating club and jewellery making.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The actions taken by the headteacher and staff to improve writing have successfully raised the standards reached by lower and higher attaining pupils as well as boys and show the school's effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities for all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

The final position in the senior leadership team has recently been filled and the school now benefits from the staff's good range of complementary skills. Subject leaders make an important contribution to leading teaching and learning, particularly in English and mathematics. It is because the senior staff and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, based on effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of its work, that staff were able to

address the decline in writing quickly and ensure rapid improvements. The school's development plan sets out an appropriate and detailed agenda for the improvement of the school for 2008/09, although arrangements set out to evaluate success are sometimes not sharp enough. Governors are very supportive of the staff and the pupils and visit regularly to see the school at work. However, they do not yet hold the staff rigorously enough to account for the school's performance. Work is already underway to strengthen their role.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is very strong and there are good links with the local community. The school has the International School Award and an impressive range of links with communities in India and Africa. A relationship has been established between pupils in Year 3 and their counterparts in a school in a very different area in Bristol but this is currently at an early stage in its development.

The school has good relationships with parents and carers who are provided with fortnightly newsletters with information about events and various aspects of the work of the school. Views are sought through questionnaires, and other more informal approaches, and generally acted upon. The school has excellent partnerships with a wide range of external organisations to extend the opportunities for pupils both academically and in their personal development. Good examples of these are the effective partnership with the local secondary school, the multi-agency approaches used to support individual pupils when required and the close links with the church.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements well. Checks have been made on all adults who work within the school and a single central record is maintained and updated when needed. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are appropriately carried out.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Just over 100 questionnaires were returned which is a good response for this size of school. Parents and carers are confident that their children are safe and enjoy school. They are also pleased with the progress children make and the way the school encourages healthy lifestyles. Inspectors fully endorse these positive views. A small minority have concerns over information about children's progress. The school has rightly recognised the need to review arrangements and has plans to take action in the near future.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007/08, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007/08, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007/08, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007/08, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Backwell Church of England Junior School, Backwell,
BS48 3JJ

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection of your school, particularly for the friendly and open way in which you talked to us in discussions, in lessons and around the school.

Yours is a good school. It has some important strengths.

- You make good progress in your work, supported by good teaching and a good curriculum.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- The school cares for you well and you feel very safe.
- The headteacher and the other staff have been successful in making improvements and are determined to make the school even better.

We have asked the school to improve three aspects.

- You are now making much better progress in your writing and we have asked the school to build on this and improve writing still further.
- The school has begun to give you opportunities to consider how well you are doing in your work and to think about how to improve it. We have asked for these to be extended to help you all do better and you can help by making the most of these new opportunities.
- Governors visit the school to see you and the staff at work but do not ask the headteacher and other staff enough questions to help the governing body to understand if the school is doing as well as it should. We have asked for this part of the governors' role to be developed further.

Thank you again for your involvement in the inspection and I wish you every success for the future.

With best wishes

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

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