

Brimpton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109954
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	325065
Inspection date	25 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Stephens

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	48
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	Mrs Patricia Brims
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Wheeler
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brimpton Lane Brimpton Reading RG7 4TL
Telephone number	01189 712 311

Age group	4–11
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01189 712 311

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Pupils in this very small rural school come from a variety of backgrounds, with many travelling from outside the immediate area. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average overall and well above average in some classes. In this school most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities find aspects of English and mathematics challenging and a small minority exhibit challenging behaviour. Since the last inspection the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased. There are fewer pupils who speak English as an additional language than in most schools. Far more pupils enter and leave the school at times other than the beginning of the school year than in most schools. The school has reviewed and improved the use of available space, reorganised classes, and the headteacher has been released from her class teaching commitment to offer additional support in all classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught with Year 1 pupils, Years 2, 3 and 4 are taught together and Years 5 and 6 are taught separately. The school belongs to a local federation of small schools.

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. Small class sizes ensure that all adults know the pupils well. The school has a strong ethos of care and consideration for others. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points and attain standards that are broadly average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave Year 6. The high proportion of pupils that enter and leave the school at other than the normal times, and the above-average proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have a negative impact on standards attained. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator has reviewed procedures and established good relationships with effective outside agencies. 'The school is very supportive and introduced many things to help our child in class', is typical of several comments received from parents. Nevertheless, the acceleration of progress and the raising of standards is a priority for the school and urgent action is being taken to achieve this.

Although the teaching observed was good, the wide range of evidence considered by inspectors, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, indicates that teaching overall is satisfactory. Opportunities to further challenge the more able pupils and help them to attain the higher levels are not always taken. Pupils also have too few opportunities to work independently and apply the skills they are taught in subjects across the curriculum. The recently revised skills-based curriculum is beginning to address these weaknesses but it is too early to judge the impact of this approach. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or those who find it difficult to concentrate for long periods are well supported by teaching assistants. A range of strategies is used to help them in their learning and there is evidence that their progress, although currently satisfactory overall, is beginning to accelerate.

The ethos of the school and robust procedures to ensure the safety of pupils encourage their good personal development and well-being. Pupils feel happy and secure because they are well known by all adults and know who to turn to if they have problems that they need to discuss. Although some pupils occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour, there are good systems, consistently employed by all staff, that support them when required. Good links with external agencies enable the school to draw on advice and support when it is needed. Consequently, disruption to lessons is kept to a minimum.

The good curriculum provides many opportunities for the pupils to widen their experiences through visits and visitors. It also provides specialist sports coaching and opportunities to work with pupils from other schools. Pupils are well cared for and procedures to ensure their safety are rigorously applied. Procedures to assess progress have focused on regular testing and the assessment of progress at the conclusion of units of work. Although procedures to track the day-to-day progress of pupils are now more secure they are not yet consistently and rigorously applied to ensure that work is always well matched to pupils' needs.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's presence contributes much to the climate of care and support that pervades the school. It is too early to judge the impact of the recently formed senior management team. It does have a good overview of achievement and standards, but its systems to monitor the impact of teaching on learning are underdeveloped and not consistent. Consequently, advice to teachers about how they might improve their practice is not sufficiently based on first-hand observations. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are proactive and know the school well. They are working with the local authority

to improve their skills in planning for the future and to ensure that they hold the school more rigorously to account for the standards attained and the progress pupils make.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's starting points vary but are generally in line with expectations for their age. They make satisfactory progress. When they enter Year 1 many are working within the expected levels in all areas of learning but some are below expectations in aspects of language and communication and occasionally in personal and social development. This is because these children have specific needs and respond more slowly to the good provision that effectively promotes the children's personal development and well-being. Staff are in the process of reviewing the environment in which the children work. Clearly identified learning areas have just been established and equipped, and time is allowed for children to make choices for independent learning activities. Children have the opportunity to relate to several adults during the week and consequently speak confidently, willingly explaining to visitors what they are doing. One boy working with older pupils commented, 'I like independent working but I would like to do more of it.' Children share a class with Year 1 pupils and benefit from the opportunities that exist for them to play and work together. Time is organised well to ensure that the younger children also regularly take part in activities directed by adults. This was observed when they were encouraged to order, count, toss and race with pancakes that they had made. The teaching assistant skilfully questioned the pupils, encouraging them to explain, for example, that 'we shouldn't eat the pancakes if we drop them on the floor because the floor has germs on it'. Praise was also used effectively to control the behaviour of an over-excited child. The partnership with parents is good and they appreciate the level of care that their children receive. Induction procedures are secure and entry to school on a full-time basis is flexible so that individual needs can be met in consultation with parents. Leadership and management are satisfactory but improving. Staff are in the process of seeking advice to improve provision still further. Assessment procedures are good and used by all staff. This has been an area of development that is now becoming successfully embedded.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in mathematics, reading and writing throughout the school by ensuring that work is well matched to pupils' needs, especially the more able, and by consistently providing opportunities for pupils to apply and embed the skills they are taught in subjects across the curriculum.
- Ensure that the headteacher and leadership team develop systems that rigorously monitor the impact of teaching on learning and use the information gathered so that all pupils make good progress.

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

There is considerable year-on-year fluctuation in the attainment of year groups. This is a common feature of small schools and occurs because variations in the performance of each individual can have a disproportionate effect on standards overall. Therefore the results of the

National Curriculum tests for a single year need to be treated with some caution. At Brimpton School this situation is further exacerbated by the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the high turnover of pupils. Analysis of the progress made by individual pupils confirms that they make satisfactory progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are broadly average at the end of Year 6. Pupils currently in Year 2 and 6 are on track to attain the challenging targets that have been set. It is too early to judge the impact of the whole school initiative to develop skills-based learning but there is evidence to indicate that more opportunities are beginning to be provided for pupils to apply, practise and improve their skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils say they feel secure and enjoy school. They have good attitudes to learning, supported by good relationships. Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. Pupils who sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour respond well to the support they receive. Bullying is rare and the school's procedures ensure that incidents are speedily dealt with. Pupils are well aware of what makes a healthy diet and of the need for regular exercise. Attendance is in line with the national average.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Adults promote a sense of responsibility that boosts pupils' confidence and self-esteem. This is supported by residential visits and a wide choice of enrichment activities. Pupils contribute to the school by becoming enthusiastic members of the school council, making a strong contribution to school assemblies and by becoming mentors and monitors. They take part in local community events, and have frequent opportunities to mix and work with pupils from nearby schools. Activities such as these enable pupils to display mature social skills but standards need to rise further to help ensure their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Classes have very recently been reorganised in an attempt to accelerate progress and to enable some groups with well above-average numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities to receive the extra support and guidance that they need. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these changes on progress. Nevertheless, all teaching observed during the inspection was good and securely based on very good relationships. Behaviour is managed well and pupils work well together. Teachers are very clear about what they expect pupils to learn in lessons and they proceed with a sense of purpose. However, it is only recently that sufficient emphasis has been given to ensuring that pupils have plenty of opportunities to work independently and to apply the skills they are taught in a variety of subjects across the curriculum. Teachers adequately meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but do not provide consistently challenging tasks for the more able pupils. Consequently, too few pupils exceed the nationally expected levels in the annual national tests. Teaching assistants and learning support assistants, who work with pupils who have statements of need, support pupils well, ensuring that they are fully included in all activities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Strong emphasis is placed on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), and innovative developments have started to make links across the subjects. For example, it was clear that Key Stage 2 pupils enjoyed their work on the Tudors and are now using their knowledge to further their literacy skills. French is now taught in all year groups, including Reception. The school has enriched the curriculum by engaging fully in activities provided through the federation of local small schools. In addition, the association with the feeder secondary school is used to challenge pupils who are more competent in mathematics and languages. Pupils say that one of the reasons they enjoy school is because of the variety of after-school experiences available to them. These include French, the performing arts and a wide range of sporting activities. They receive specialist coaching in football, basketball, tennis, music and ICT. The school arranges a number of visits to enhance pupils' learning, including a residential outdoor activities course.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The day-to-day pastoral care provided for pupils is a strength of the school. One parent wrote, 'All the teaching staff are wonderful and there's a real sense of care and commitment.' The school has gone a long way to elicit the views of pupils and to encourage them to take responsibility. There are effective procedures for child protection and health and safety. Pupils say that adults are easily approachable if they have any worries. There is a clear policy on behaviour and this is understood by pupils and consistently applied by staff. A comprehensive programme of personal, health and social education ensures that pupils are encouraged to stay healthy and safe and to respect others. Good use is made of outside agencies and visiting experts to further pupils' personal development and sense of responsibility. Pupils who have particular needs or difficulties are well supported. Procedures for the day-to-day tracking of progress are now more robust. Information gained is used to set learning targets for pupils. They can explain their literacy targets but are less sure about those relating to mathematics. It is too early to assess the long-term impact of these targets on achievement. The quality of marking has similarly improved so that pupils are clearer about how to move on to the next steps in learning. One said, 'I enjoy reading the comments.'

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher leads with care and consideration and contributes much to the positive ethos of this very small school. She recognises the need to further support teachers in their endeavours to accelerate achievement and raise standards, as a priority. The recent reorganisation will release her from her teaching commitment and give her more time to do this. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this action but there is a need to ensure that procedures, such as the regular and systematic monitoring of teaching and its impact on learning, become more rigorous. The recently formed senior leadership team has also strengthened the management structure by enabling two senior staff to become more fully involved in strategic planning and in monitoring the impact of decisions taken. Governors visit regularly and recognise the good work that has created a welcoming school with a positive learning ethos. They are aware that

standards need to improve and are working closely with the local authority to ensure that they hold the school more rigorously to account for the achievement of the pupils and the standards they attain. A good start has been made in promoting community cohesion, which is satisfactory. The school has a good understanding of the diverse needs of the school community and these are met well. It has established links with sections of the local community and is helping pupils gain an understanding of the wider community through assemblies and other aspects of the curriculum.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
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?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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/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

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	3
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

09 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brimpton Church of England Primary School, Reading, RG7 4TL

On behalf of your inspectors, thank you for being so welcoming, polite and friendly when we came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you and looking at all your work and the exciting things that you do.

You go to a satisfactory school. We think there are many things that happen in your school that are good and here are some of them.

- Your teachers and teaching assistants care for you very well and plan many exciting and interesting things for you to do.
- You play and work well together and your behaviour is good. You care for each other well.
- Your teachers provide many interesting clubs, out of school activities and visitors. You have opportunities to meet and work with pupils from other schools.
- You listen and follow instructions well.

Every school has things that could be improved. Here are our suggestions.

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics need to improve. You need to practise the skills you are taught and use them whenever you can in all the subjects you are taught.
- We have asked your teachers to carry on supporting you well but to make sure that you all find the work challenging so that you all achieve as well as you can.
- We have asked your headteacher to visit you more often in your classes to find out about the progress you are making and to advise your teachers so that they do an even better job.

Yours faithfully

Graham Stephens

Lead Inspector