

Brill Church of England Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110418
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325148
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Charalambos Loizou

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)	181
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 Katie Sutcliffe
Headteacher	Mr Andy Leach
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Firs Brill Aylesbury HP18 9RY

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Inspection number	325148

Telephone number

01844 237 710

Fax number

01844 238 831

Age group 4-11

Inspection date 26 March 2009

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the following areas:

- the extent to which the teaching is raising standards in Years 3 to 6
- how well teachers use assessment to check pupils' progress, including the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the impact of the teaching and curriculum on more able pupils.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, work in books, the analysis of test results, teachers' assessments and records of pupils' performance, as well as parents' responses to questionnaires and discussions with pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a rural primary school serving the village of Brill and the surrounding area. Reception children join the Early Years Foundation Stage full time each September in the school year of their fifth birthday. The vast majority of pupils are White British and very few come from minority ethnic backgrounds, although a very small number are in the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low compared to most schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The main areas of need are in relation to speech and language difficulties or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. There have been substantial staff changes since the last inspection. The headteacher was appointed at the start of this term. The school has a number of nationally accredited awards in recognition of its commitment to the sustainable use of energy and to the environment. There is pre-school provision and an after-school club on the school site, although they are not managed by the governors and were not part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brill is a good school where pupils achieve well and reach above-average standards. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and towards others are excellent. Pupils try hard and enjoy school because the staff provide a good range of stimulating activities in lessons and at other times. The school is well led and managed and, as many parents have confirmed, the new headteacher has made a good start. The large majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are particularly pleased with the way the headteacher has communicated his vision for the future. The general consensus among parents is, as one wrote, 'The staff have the interests of the children at heart.'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start, both socially and academically. Good teaching, support and care enable Reception children to learn and develop in a stimulating and positive environment where their efforts are valued and they grow in confidence. The teaching is good overall across the school, although some tasks in lessons are not always demanding enough of all pupils, which slows their progress. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and there is often good support for those who find learning difficult. Most parents are pleased with the progress their children are making and, although a few would like to see their children make better progress, these concerns were expressed in a constructive tone, reflecting their trust in the staff and the new headteacher.

Pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science are above those expected for their age by the end of Years 2 and 6, reflecting good rates of progress in relation to their starting points. In Years 1 and 2, teachers' assessments and national test results show that standards have been rising well since the last inspection. The results for Year 6 pupils vary and in some years have shown a slight decline because some of the more capable pupils fell just short of reaching levels that are higher than expected for their age (Level 5). This reflects inconsistencies in the way teachers assess, monitor and track pupils' progress and performance. Although there has been some disruption to staffing in recent years, the quality of the teaching remains good and improvements to current standards in Years 3 to 6 reflect an upward trend.

The teaching of letter sounds (phonics) is effective, so pupils develop their reading skills consistently well. There are good opportunities for pupils to practise a wide range of descriptive and imaginative writing and poetry, giving them confidence to write independently. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language are well supported, so they make good progress. In all classes, lessons are structured well, so that pupils can explain their ideas and assess their own learning. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to investigate and explore challenging tasks in mathematics and science, and to undertake stimulating writing tasks in English, which result in good rates of progress.

The curriculum is good, although some tasks in lessons do not always challenge the more able pupils. The staff provide an excellent range of enrichment activities that broaden pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. Pupils' involvement in studying the sustainable use of energy and a range of eco-projects extends their understanding and helps them to apply skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn to speak Spanish and French and older pupils particularly enjoy writing to their pen pals in a school in France by e-mail. The use of visits and visitors and opportunities to celebrate and study a range of customs, festivals and cultures from around the world contribute well to pupils' good spiritual and cultural development. There are good partnerships with other

organisations and schools, including joint art projects where pupils' work is displayed in the community, and participation in a good range of musical events and performances.

The staff value pupils' efforts and this is reflected in the high quality and wide range of displays of pupils' work. Teachers and support staff provide good care, guidance and support which contribute significantly to pupils' good personal development. Attendance rates are good and pupils are attentive in lessons and in the well-planned assemblies; they often show maturity beyond their years. A wide range of extra-curricular clubs, as well as sporting activities, add interest and enjoyment to learning. Combined with healthy lunches and a good range of outdoor activities and safety projects, these contribute to pupils' good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning and understanding of new technologies.

Governors make a good contribution to the school and its community. Together with an effective senior leadership team, governors seek parents' views and keep them well informed. Pupils' views are also sought and their involvement as school councillors enables them to play a part in helping the school to develop. One pupil rightly commented, 'It's really nice in this school because you do lots and everyone is so friendly.'

In a short time, the headteacher has widened the scope for teachers to assist in managing subjects and to take on more responsibilities. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher have encouraged staff and governors to assess accurately the impact of the school's work on the pupils. A good start has been made in improving the way teachers assess and record pupils' progress. Even so, there is still scope to develop assessment further so that teachers can accurately check how well pupils are doing in order to ensure that they all reach their targets. Despite staff changes, there has been good progress since the last inspection and the school is well placed to keep on improving.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Reception children join the school with skills and abilities that are broadly in line with those expected of four-year-olds. The staff skilfully provide purposeful activities that enable the children to make good progress. Consequently, by the time they start Year 1, the children are working comfortably within the early stages of the National Curriculum.

The children enjoy a stimulating range of activities. They have easy access to well-resourced outdoor areas which provide regular opportunities for them to work and play in open spaces. The staff are good at helping the children to develop early reading, writing, problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills. The children do particularly well in developing their personal and social skills, with the many opportunities for them to share and exchange ideas when making models or when engaged in role play or shared reading activities. The staff keep good records of children's progress and performance, although there is scope to develop these further to ensure that more regular checks are made so that all children reach their expected targets. There are good partnerships with parents, some of whom help in lessons, and the staff are good at keeping parents informed about their children's learning and welfare. The children enjoy their time in the Reception Year and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. There are effective and seamless arrangements in place when the children transfer to Year 1 so that they settle quickly into class routines. Children develop their confidence, self-esteem and communication skills well and the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide activities and tasks in lessons that are more closely tailored to the needs of all pupils, particularly those who are more able.
- Improve the way teachers use assessment to track the progress and performance of pupils in Years 1 to 6 and of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they all reach their expected targets.

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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?	2
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	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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

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	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

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

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brill Church of England Combined School, Aylesbury, HP18 9RY

You were all so welcoming when the inspectors came to see you. We really enjoyed talking to many of you. The school councillors are great ambassadors for the school and an inspector really enjoyed talking to them. I also enjoyed talking to pupils at lunchtime and in lessons. We learned a great deal about your school from your comments and those of your parents. Please pass on our thanks to your parents because they returned many questionnaires and their comments were really helpful.

You go to a good school. We were very pleased with your excellent behaviour and the way you try hard in lessons. The Reception children are doing well and, like the rest of you, they are very good at learning letter sounds, which is helping you to read and write accurately.

You are also doing well in mathematics, science, and information and communication technology, where we can see that standards are rising. The quality of your art and design work, and your very good achievements in music, drama and sport are fantastic. We were very impressed with your knowledge of eco-projects and the sustainable use of energy. The staff and governors are doing a good job, especially in helping the school to grow and develop still further. Even though there have been staff changes, there have been good improvements since your last inspection. Many parents are pleased with the start your new headteacher has made.

We have asked your teachers to help you do even better by providing you with more tasks in lessons that will stretch some of you even further. This is already happening in many lessons, but we would like it to happen more often in all lessons. We have also asked that the staff keep checking how well you are doing to make sure that you do not fall behind in your work and progress.

You can all help too by carrying on trying hard and supporting your teachers and each other as well as you do. You are all really mature and sensible, so keep it up.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos Loizou

Lead Inspector