

St Briavels Parochial C of E Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115697
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	326253
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2009
Reporting inspector	David Collard

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tessa Charley
Headteacher	Mandy Lloyd
Date of previous school inspection	May 2006
School address	High Street St Briavels Lydney Gloucestershire GL15 6TD
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited five lessons and looked at work going on in other lessons, and held meetings with the headteacher, governors and members of staff. He observed the school's work, and looked at various documentation such as the school improvement plan, safeguarding information, governors' minutes and subject leaders' files. He also analysed 36 parents' questionnaires and looked in detail at the following:

- whether the previous issues regarding progress, achievement and standards in mathematics and science in Years 5 and 6 had been addressed and whether the progress of pupils had now improved
- whether the roles of all layers of leadership had sufficient influence on whole-school strategies and improvement
- whether teaching and learning were consistently good throughout the school to substantiate the school's own self-evaluation.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average school serves its local village, although a significant minority of pupils come from outlying areas. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs is above average. Most of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. Since the last inspection there have been significant staff changes. The school works very closely with two other primary schools and on the second day of the inspection these three schools joined together for a 'forces' science day.

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 good school has made significant progress since its last inspection and has a good capacity to continue to do so. Much of this has come about through the clear direction provided by the headteacher. In addition, the highly creative curriculum, which is inspiring pupils to learn, has concentrated everybody's efforts on successfully raising the attainment of pupils. Issues from the last inspection related to the learning of older pupils have been successfully addressed and there is a much higher emphasis on ensuring that work matches the needs of all pupils. Parents are highly supportive of the school. Almost all the returns from the questionnaires rightly say that the progress, enjoyment and behaviour of the pupils are a particularly strong feature of the school. One comment amongst many sums this up: 'My children enjoy school and are progressing well. The focus is not just on learning but on social skills and fun.'

The exemplary behaviour of pupils is evident around the school, where pupils are extremely well cared for in a safe, nurturing and supportive atmosphere. Pupils clearly understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and fully understand how to live and play safely. This was confirmed in 2007 when they gained a Healthy School award and by becoming the 'Be Smart' school of the year. Also in this year the school gained its International School award because of its highly effective links. These include France, where pupils have been on exchange visits. Links also exist with Kenya, which a number of staff have visited, Lithuania and children from Italy have visited St Briavels.

Pupils achieve well in their academic work as a result of good teaching. While standards in the 2008 national tests were lower, pupils this year reach standards that are slightly above average. Because of the small numbers in each year, comparison with other schools nationally is difficult. In Year 6, most are achieving at their age-expected levels and, in the most recent tests, it is likely that significant numbers will do better than this. Teachers' planning is thought out well and highlights what different ability groups should be learning. The good pace of lessons and the range of different methods all make for exciting and stimulating learning. This also ensures pupils have good levels of challenge, often through different exercises or tasks. For example, writing skills in one lesson were developed through simple writing for some groups while others were asked for longer and more exciting sentence structure. A key factor in the development of this 'fun learning', as pupils put it, is the outstanding emphasis placed on linking subjects and skills. This provides pupils with

real experiences such as the combination of work in Years 3 and 4 on 'The Victorians' with the Year 5 and 6 work on the 'Second World War'. All of this has been drawn together as a topic allowing pupils to see how social history has changed over a longer period. Nevertheless, the school rightly recognises that more needs to be done on the use of assessment at an individual level to make sure a greater proportion make the expected levels of progress in English, mathematics and science, particularly between Years 2 and 6.

The headteacher's drive for excellence has been infectious amongst all the staff, who are increasingly involved in major school decisions. The governing body have undergone some changes and have been developing their expertise through intensive training. They provide a good supportive role to the school but, as yet, the level of challenge, particularly regarding pupils' progress, is at an early stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By summer 2010, ensure that at least 80% of pupils are making two levels of progress in English and mathematics between Year 2 and 6 through better use of assessment. This could include methods such as refining individual pupil targets so that every pupil knows the small steps that will help them move on to the next level.
- Improve the role of governors so that they are able to both support and challenge the work of the school and play a more active part in developing the school improvement plans.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils really do enjoy school. One comment from a parent sums this up well: 'Just from being in school it is obvious that the children are proud of their achievements.' This is also evident from pupils' comments where the word 'fun' often crops up. It is surprising therefore that, despite the best efforts of the school, attendance is only average. However, this is due to a very small number of families whose children do not attend as regularly as they should.

As there are only small numbers of children who start in the Reception class, trends in their initial standards are highly variable. Good progress through each year group is evident from the good teaching, although this has not been the case at times during the past. Consequently, some year groups have had to make up lost ground from previous years. Assessment information indicates that in Years 1 and 2 almost all pupils are making at least the expected progress. While there is some unevenness through the school, of those now in Year 6, almost all are achieving the age-expected level, with nearly half exceeding this in mathematics, reading and writing. There are good proportions of pupils in Years 5 and 6 doing better than this. However, not all pupils fully understand how to use small steps in their targets to see what needs improving next. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar levels of progress to others, but a small number of pupils in the middle and

higher ability groups could do better. Pupils' work shows that progress is good in English, mathematics and science as well as a number of other subjects, notably information and communication technology, history and art.

Good academic progress is complemented by pupils' outstanding personal progress. Pupils take a very active role within their community, suggesting ideas and involving themselves in carnivals, church events or assisting in running the school association's 'Pudding Club'. This is all helping pupils' good preparation for their future life. In particular, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is excellent. The buzz of excitement, for instance, when one teacher dressed up as an aircraft inspector, before setting work on angles to help build aircraft wings, enthused pupils to use their mathematical skills in solving a technical problem.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now consistently good throughout the school. There are also individual lessons which are outstanding. The combination of clever planning using a variety of different methods and organisation, as well as the highly effective curricular links between subjects, ensures pupils can see a purpose for their learning and want to do their best. This topic approach combines many different subject skills and encourages pupils to find out information for themselves. Teachers generally use good questioning techniques to draw out pupils' understanding and make sure that a clear outcome is shared before work starts. For example, a lesson about evacuees used role play effectively so that pupils had to think about what they had already learnt. Well-briefed teaching assistants provide good support, for pupils with learning difficulties as well as other groups or individuals. More recently, class and individual targets have been developed which

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

pupils know and understand. However, these are often too general. For example, one pupil said that his writing target was to improve his handwriting and presentation but could not explain the finer points of how he could move his writing from one level to the next. Following analysis and monitoring of teaching this is now recognised as something all staff need to tackle and improve to help raise achievement further.

During the inspection a good example of the highly innovative curriculum was demonstrated. Younger pupils had learnt about how a helicopter worked and the names of different parts. When, on the following day, a real helicopter landed in the school field these younger pupils were able to see the relevance of what they had learnt and to ask pertinent questions. This stimulating event was then used by the whole school to develop a series of tasks connected with 'forces'. Pupils enjoy finding out new information, such as through the revised homework systems. As one parent mentioned, 'My son is so excited he has completed his homework without my nagging!' Extra-curricular activities are varied, with 'something to do every day'. These also include residential trips, music tuition and sports events.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. The school's systems are extremely thorough, both for checking suitability of staff and for health and safety. Regular risk assessments take place and weaknesses addressed rapidly. Pupils say they feel safe and secure and know who to turn to in the event of a problem. Contact with outside agencies is used very effectively to support vulnerable pupils and their families and issues are dealt with sensitivity.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has built a strong and effective team and a school which parents feel confident to support. Despite being a small school, most teachers take an effective subject lead. Monitoring is regular and realistic and helps provide the information needed to build up an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has also helped ensure that the school provides everybody with better opportunities to develop well. Lower test results last year were analysed and action taken to remedy them. The impact from these measures is noticeable in the systematic use of data to evaluate whole-school trends. Ongoing training has been developed well using internal and external specialists and by combining the expertise of two other local schools. This has all helped build extremely strong partnerships which are eliminating any weaker elements of the school's provision. The governors provide conscientious support. They make sure policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and carry out their roles satisfactorily. An analysis of their own expertise

identified the need to have the right information to identify where further challenge is needed. Following training, this is their target set for the future and, if successful, will help provide the headteacher and other leaders with the formulation of the yearly school improvement plan. Community cohesion procedures are excellent. An audit has been undertaken and a strategy laid out with a planned series of monitoring. Not content with what has been achieved, the school is now aiming to make even better national links with schools from different socio-economic backgrounds.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children start school with skills just below those expected, although, because of varying numbers, there is considerable fluctuation from year to year. Children make good progress, with most being prepared for more formal work as they move through the rest of the school. Particularly good progress is made in personal, social and emotional development and in early reading and mathematical skills. For example, children working on their number bonds knew the answers to the questions orally although some had difficulty writing the numbers correctly. Teachers and other adults effectively plan activities encompassing all the different areas of learning. Play is an important part of this process. A group of children were seen drawing squares and riding their bikes into the correct boxes when the adult called out questions such as 'What is two more than three?' while another group used a marble maze to count numbers. On a few occasions adults, in their enthusiasm to help, do not always give the children enough time to discover things for themselves and so make their own mistakes. This then inhibits children's independence and exploration skills. A number of the children are quite artistic and all are good communicators. They enjoy the varied activities and play happily with each other as well as with the adults as relationships are strong. The inside and outside areas are used well as a freeflow area, although the outside is quite restricted. The school has done well to use this as effectively as it has but plans are being developed to find a larger area and so provide better facilities. Leadership is good. Safety and welfare are of prime

importance and a close supervision is expected at all times. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and good plans for the future have been based on a thorough analysis of both provision and outcomes for children.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Almost all parents are highly supportive of the work of the school, the progress their children make and the good quality of leadership and teaching. Of the many comments received there was a common theme about the strong impact of a more creative curriculum and about how the school is welcoming and at the centre of the community. As with pupils, an often used word about learning is that it is 'fun and exciting.' While a very small number of parents were not totally satisfied there were no written comments to explain this view.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Briavels Parochial C of E Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspectors received 37 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 78 parents and carers registered at the school.

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 2007-8, 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 2007-8, 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 2007-8, 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 2007-8, 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:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
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.

11 June 2009

Dear Pupils



Inspection of St Briavels Parochial C of E Primary School, Lydney GL15 6TD

Thank you for making us so welcome during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you all and hearing about all the things you are doing. I expect you will remember the visit of the helicopter for a long time to come. As I promised some of you, this letter explains some of the main points of my report. Firstly though, you will not be surprised to hear that I have said yours is a good school. Here are some of the reasons why.

- You told me how much you enjoy school. One of the words I often heard was about how learning was 'fun'. I can see why. You are given lots of exciting things to do and this helps you see a reason for what you are learning.
- You make good progress in lessons and achieve well. This is not just in your academic work but also in the way you all get on well together.
- You told me that behaviour was excellent in the school and I agree. Your parents think so too.
- You are taught well. Some of the lessons I saw were outstanding and really did make you think hard. Your teachers have tried hard to make your work interesting and that is why so many subjects are linked together.
- I was particularly impressed with the links you have with other schools and countries. You also told me about the many different activities you do during school time as well as before and after school.
- You are looked after and cared for extremely well. The adults make sure that you are kept safe.
- Your headteacher knows what to do to make things better and I have suggested two things which should help you make your school one of the best. Firstly, I have asked that the targets you are given give you specific ways that you can improve. This will help you understand what to do next to improve. Secondly, I have asked that your governors now help your headteacher even more so that they can help develop all the great plans for the future.

You can do your bit to help. Make sure that you keep working hard, attend regularly and suggest ways to help the school improve. Best wishes for the rest of your time at St Briavels.

Yours faithfully

David Collard
Lead inspector

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