

# Barkway VA Church of England First School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117422
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326603
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jill Bavin

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.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	46
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tom Luckcock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jenny Heinzelmann
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 May 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	High Street Barkway Royston Hertfordshire SG8 8EF

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326603

**Telephone number**  
**Fax number**

01763 848283  
01763 849777

<b>Age group</b>	3-9
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 April 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326603

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

This inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- What is the impact to date of the school's recent focus on mathematics?
- To what extent have governors developed their monitoring and evaluation role since the previous inspection?
- Are any elements of children's personal development outstanding, arising from any elements of outstanding provision?

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons and break-times, looking at children's work, talking with children, staff and governors, checking the school's record of assessment and children's progress, and analysing the results of questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail and the inspection 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 very small village school with only two classes. The headteacher teaches the older pupils for part of the week. The school offers nursery provision which is managed by the governors. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught by an unqualified teacher. There is a much smaller proportion of children eligible for free school meals than nationally. In the school as a whole, there is a lower than average percentage of children with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, although in some year groups the proportion is high. Attainment on entry is broadly average although, in the context of small year groups, it varies considerably.

The school has received various awards in recognition of its work. These include the BSA Quality Mark and Artsmark in 2007 and the Food for Life Partnership award in 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspectors endorse the school's own judgement that Barkway is a good school. Some elements of its work are outstanding. Since the previous inspection, standards have gradually risen and pupils achieve and behave well. They reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 2 assessments in 2008 were particularly good. This group of pupils reached well above average standards in all three areas, having made exceptional progress. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to reach above average standards having achieved well during their time in the school. Good progress continues in Years 3 and 4. Pupils currently in Year 4 are on track to exceed expectations for their age in English and reach broadly expected standards in mathematics.

The governors, headteacher and subject leaders work together effectively and lead the school well. They have built effectively on its strengths since the previous inspection, suggesting a good capacity for further improvement. Governance has improved because the governors hold the school to account more closely and systematically. There is a shared sense of purpose in continuing to raise standards and avoiding the occasional 'dips' that sometimes occur when year groups are small. One outcome of the good teamwork is the school's better understanding of what is working well and what the staff need to focus on for greater improvement.

Nevertheless, not all the school's planned improvements contain precise measures of success to evaluate progress easily. That said, analysis of improvement has become more effective since the previous inspection. It has led, for example, to a recent drive to give older pupils far more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects. This has begun to have a positive effect. Pupils are making greater use of skills such as measurement and calculation in a variety of interesting topics, such as in work on the rainforest. They are also showing signs of increased confidence in mathematics and answering mental problems more rapidly and accurately.

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers plan conscientiously to meet the varying needs within and across the year groups in their class. They make good use of their knowledge of each pupil to modify work and address individual needs. As a result, pupils who find learning harder than others and the more able make good progress too. Nevertheless, opportunities to add even more interest and sparkle to lessons and assemblies by involving pupils more actively are sometimes missed. The school has successfully maintained previous strengths in its curriculum. Pupils and their families appreciate the extensive enrichment available through a wide range of clubs. These include, engineering, guitar, gardening, and Latin. An extensive programme of special events is also offered. Good care, guidance and support promote good personal development. A combination of good relationships with their teachers, and well delivered topic work that makes interesting links between subjects contributes to pupils' good level of enjoyment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They develop a secure sense of justice and willingly reflect, for example, on what makes people, including themselves, special. They are extremely keen to adopt healthy lifestyles, enthusiastically participating in daily exercise routines as well as the several sports opportunities that are provided. They have an exceptionally strong understanding of healthy eating, born out of growing their own vegetables and working with the midday supervisor to display information about the origin of the produce in daily menus. The strength of pupils' personal skills, coupled with their good progress in literacy and mathematical understanding means that they are well prepared for the future.

The school is extremely successful in promoting equality and eliminating discrimination. An impressive outcome of this is the maturity that pupils demonstrate when they talk about their relationships with each other. They are exceptionally well aware of how their own actions affect others and are impressively tolerant of diversity. They also have a remarkable sense of belonging to a broad community. All the staff work extremely closely with parents, local people and other professionals to the benefit of pupils. This helps staff to respond flexibly to particular individual needs. For example, a drama therapist provides support for individuals, and some pupils work with older year groups in areas of particular academic strength. Parents value these arrangements and are overwhelmingly positive about the approachability of the headteacher and staff. One parent wrote that her child with learning difficulties 'achieved academically more than we could have dreamed of.' The views of many are summed up by the comment, 'My son has benefited hugely from the caring and nurturing environment, encouraging creativity and freedom of expression'.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

This provision is well led and managed. Much work has been undertaken to ensure that children receive experiences that reflect the latest national requirements. Staff work well together. They set an unfailingly courteous example of how to behave and communicate so, while the children have fun, they still receive consistent messages about what is expected of them, behave well, and settle quickly. This is appreciated by parents who remark on how much their children enjoy their introduction to school life. Much care is taken to ensure that children are, and feel, safe and secure. There is a good focus on early literacy and numeracy skills and expectations are well-pitched to provide achievable challenge. These strengths contribute to children's readiness to learn and the good progress that they make both academically and socially, regardless of their starting points. Individual children and cohorts vary considerably, but most commonly children join Year 1 with a level of skill just above expectations for their age. They trust the adults working with them and, as a result, learn well, co-operating with staff and each other.

Staff have a good understanding of how children at this age learn best, so they provide a good variety of interesting resources, such as a 'disembowelled' computer in 'the workshop' for children to tinker with. Nevertheless, opportunities are sometimes missed for children to take greater control in organising and arranging resources for themselves. Staff keep detailed records of what the children do and have recently identified the need for a more focused record of children's achievements. They are starting to introduce this. Staff are increasingly responding to children's interests as they arise. There are plenty of opportunities for children to make choices and learn through practical experimentation. This helps them to concentrate well, whether working independently or in a small group. For example, during the inspection one boy persevered impressively while experimenting with gravity and forces as he positioned objects at the top of a sloping piece of guttering and then let go.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the variety of teaching strategies and the level of pupil participation, in order to enhance further acquisition of pupils' skills through interest and enjoyment.
- Ensure that planned improvements and their success criteria are consistently precise and measurable.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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?	1
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 <sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup>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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1
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**

1 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Barkway VA First School, Royston, SG8 8EF

We enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school recently and want to thank you for being so friendly and helpful. A special thank you goes to those children who met with us in the library and those children who showed Mr Rudman their work. We agree with you and your families that you go to a good school. Here are some of the good things we found:

- you make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and reach high standards in these subjects by the time you leave Year 2
- children in Years 3 and 4 carry on making good progress
- you behave well in class and around school
- you are extremely grown up in your understanding of children who are different from you
- you are extremely willing to exercise and eat healthily
- you have lots of interesting activities, especially through your clubs and special visits and visitors
- you feel safe in school and like your teachers
- the governors, headteacher and teachers work closely together to keep finding ways to make your school even better.

We agree with you that some lessons could be even more interesting and enjoyable. So that they are, we have asked your teachers to give you even more chances to be actively involved in lessons. We have also asked the headteacher, governors and teachers to make sure that they can always measure whether new ideas and changes in the school are working.

You can help everyone by continuing to try hard. Thank you again for being so helpful to us.

Yours sincerely

Jill Bavin Lead inspector