

Brenzett Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118703
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326875
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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)	126
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	Salley Flack
Headteacher	Howard Fisher
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Brenzett Romney Marsh TN29 9UA
Telephone number	01797 344335
Fax number	01797 344637

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Brenzett Church of England Primary School is smaller than average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high and has increased year on year since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of children join the school in Reception, the last part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), but a higher than average proportion of pupils join or leave the school in other year groups. Some pupils travel from a distance because of the school's rural location. The school runs a breakfast club, and a private provider runs a daily after-school club on the school premises. The school has a number of awards including Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy School status, a Travel Plan award and local authority recognition for the development of modern languages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Brenzett School has developed well since its last inspection. It now provides a good education for its pupils and has a good capacity to continue this improvement. Parents are positive about the school and pupils appreciate the 'excellent' atmosphere, saying that they are welcomed by staff and other children. Pupils comment particularly that the school is 'a lovely school to come to' and 'is a very happy place'.

The school has maintained good quality care, guidance and support for its pupils so that their personal development and well-being are good. This is a school which listens to and accommodates the views of parents and pupils very well, although a small minority of parents comment that they would appreciate more frequent and earlier information about school activities. Staff make strenuous efforts to bring the local community into the school and give parents and their children opportunities to experience events together, such as learning to make kites. Such events and the school's work with external agencies are used exceptionally well to support pupils' well-being and the care for vulnerable pupils. Pupils are well-behaved, feel safe and have a good understanding of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles. Attendance is average overall and has improved well over the last year. Strong links with pre-school providers and local schools ensure that pupils have high levels of support at transition points. These partnerships also support the curriculum well, for example in contributing to sports activities.

Pupils achieve well from their good start in Reception. Standards are around national averages in all subjects and have been on an upward path in recent years. Last year, standards rose in the Year 2 assessments, but declined in the Year 6 tests. This was partly because of the complex learning needs within the year group, but also because some pupils did not make enough progress in mathematics from their Year 2 levels. This situation has now been resolved and, as a result of effective teaching and a well-planned curriculum, pupils make good progress throughout the school. Changes to the curriculum, linking subjects under themes and including theme days, have successfully made learning interesting and enjoyable. Teachers plan activities which take good account of the different needs and prior achievement of pupils in their classes. Individual plans for pupils with learning difficulties clearly identify their next steps, but sometimes their tasks are not sufficiently closely matched to their identified weaknesses, or are not challenging enough. However, the needs of those with the most significant and complex difficulties are met well. Academic guidance is good and older pupils have a good understanding of their targets and what they have to achieve next. On occasion, marking does not identify how pupils' work could be improved further and pupils are not given enough opportunities to implement suggested actions for improvement in follow-up work.

The school's improvements are largely due to the skills of the headteacher and leadership team and to the active governing body. Staff work well together to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work. They use their understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring further development well to make changes which improve pupils' achievements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Some children join the Reception class from a local nursery setting, while some have no formal pre-school experience. Children's attainment on entry to school is varied, but overall it is well

below that expected for children of this age. Often, there are significant weaknesses in children's communication, language and literacy skills. Links with parents are firmly established before their children start school. Staff understand children's starting points well, and ongoing observations of children's development are used well to plan activities which take them forward quickly. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early, and are given carefully focused support. Teaching is good and activities are designed to encourage children to talk about what they are doing. Recent changes place a strong emphasis on developing children's early literacy skills through phonics and giving them a wide range of opportunities to begin to write. Children make good progress across all the areas for their learning, although standards by the end of EYFS are still below expectations in literacy, numeracy and creative development.

Staff provide good care for children, so that their welfare is promoted well. This and supportive links with older pupils result in children being comfortable and happy. They respond well to adults and develop good relationships with one another because routines are clear and consistent. Evaluation of provision and the action taken to develop practice are key features of the good leadership and management. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The outdoor area, for example, now gives children exciting opportunities for learning through play. Leaders are not complacent and have plans to develop this further so that children can experience an even broader range of experiences through the outdoor environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking identifies how pupils' work can be improved and that pupils are given opportunities to follow up on advice given.
- Match the work given to pupils with learning difficulties more closely to their identified weaknesses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils start Year 1 with lower standards than expected for their age. As they develop their literacy skills, pupils also gain a momentum in other aspects of their learning. They make good progress through the school, so that standards by the time pupils leave Year 6 are broadly in line with, and sometimes above, national averages. There have been good improvements in English in recent years and a current focus on improving mathematics standards is proving successful. The school's data indicate that pupils are on course to meet, and possibly exceed, the targets set for their performance this year. Generally, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their classmates because of the good support they receive. However, some of these pupils are not challenged fully all of the time by the tasks set for them. Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved and pupils are confident in their use of a variety of software to support their learning. These skills and their positive attitudes prepare them well for the next stage in their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour in lessons is typically good and pupils are friendly and welcoming. Pupils say that they find the school a friendly place where they feel happy and safe. The school has taken effective steps to improve behaviour at lunchtimes, although a small minority of children think it could still be better. Behaviour in lessons is sometimes outstanding, such as in a music lesson

when pupils concentrated exceptionally well as they played the drums. Attendance has improved and, although the attendance rate is only broadly average, the vast majority of pupils attend well.

Pupils make a good contribution to the community. The school council is active, has campaigned on local road safety issues and has contributed constructively to the new behaviour policy. Pupils are active in fund-raising for a wide variety of charities. They adopt healthy lifestyles well and appreciate the good opportunities they have for physical exercise. Pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong and collaborate well in lessons. Their spiritual development is promoted well in line with the school's faith status and pupils have some understanding of other faiths. A recent e-mail project with France has given them some insight into a different culture. Nevertheless, their understanding of the diversity of British society has some gaps. Plans are in place to broaden pupils' awareness through links with an inner city school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers manage their classes well. There is a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms and pupils are clear that they are there to learn. Teachers take good account of the different abilities and ages within their classes and use a range of activities for different groups. They identify key questions and share the intended learning well with pupils. Consequently pupils enjoy their work because they know what is required of them and their tasks take learning forward at a fast pace. Teachers use some innovative and lively approaches which engage pupils, for example when 'dividers attack numbers' in a numeracy lesson on division. Questioning is generally probing, helping pupils to deepen their understanding, but sometimes older pupils are not given enough time to expand on their answers or to work things out for themselves. Whilst teachers provide well for pupils with learning difficulties by setting different work for them, they recognise that there is still room for improvement in the way some tasks are matched to pupils' individual learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and staff take account of national guidance to review and develop it. A particular strength is the way in which teachers plan special events, such as science and Tudor days, to stimulate learning. This is complemented by a range of visits to places linked to the curriculum themes. The school has developed well the creative aspects of the curriculum, such as art and music, since the last inspection. The more recent developments to link subjects are successful and staff realise that it is time to review this approach further and to find more opportunities to develop and consolidate pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Personal, social and health education provision is good and supports pupils well in developing a sense of community and understanding of their roles and responsibilities as young citizens. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in a variety of enrichment activities and clubs, which meet their interests well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care provided by the school is a real strength and this is reflected in the happy and welcoming atmosphere. For example, pupils attending the breakfast club gain greatly from the activities on offer. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs carefully assessed. A wide range of support is provided to match pupils' needs and ensure their personal welfare, with very effective use of outside agencies. However, the school recognises that the support, in terms of the activities for pupils with learning difficulties in lessons, is not always finely enough tuned to their needs. The work of the family liaison officer and also the 'family room', which is the base for a number of services to families including counselling, promote community cohesion well.

Pupils' books are regularly marked and the feedback from teachers is detailed and helpful. This marking is used to set helpful targets for improvement and most pupils have a clear idea of what they need to concentrate on. However, pupils are not always guided clearly enough to follow up on the advice in their books, for example by correcting their spellings.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has worked systematically to review and develop many aspects of the school since the last inspection and good progress has been made in several significant areas. For example, steps taken to improve standards in writing have been successful. The focus on making lessons more interesting and creative is reflected in the positive views of pupils. At the same time, the leadership roles of subject coordinators have been developed so that they now take the lead on evaluating and improving standards in their subjects. New approaches to teaching calculation are helping pupils to become more confident in mathematics. Teaching assistants support pupils well and many have been trained to run specific programmes to help pupils who are not making the expected rates of progress. However, their role in assessing pupils' progress is not consistently developed to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties are consistently challenged at the right level. Self-evaluation is accurate and is helping to move the school forward well. The recent track record of improvement shows that the school has built up a good capacity for further development. Governors support the school's improvement well, and keep in close contact with developments through the 'governor of the month scheme'.

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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?	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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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	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	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**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Brenzett CE Primary School, Brenzett TN29 9UA

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Years 5 and 6 pupils playing drums was a highlight of the visit. Thank you for taking time out of your lunch break to talk to us about your school. We agree with you that Brenzett Church of England Primary School is a good school.

These are some of the best things we found out.

- You enjoy coming to school because it is a friendly and welcoming place.
- You work hard and like the interesting tasks your teachers set for you in lessons.
- You make good progress and are prepared well for secondary school.
- The personal, social and health education programme helps you to know how take care of yourselves so that you feel safe and secure.
- Adults take good care of you and you know what to do if there is a problem.
- Most of you really enjoy taking part in sport and you know well how to stay fit and healthy.
- You behave very well and like the family atmosphere in the school.
- Your headteacher and staff work well together and make sure that the school improves all the time.

Your school knows what it needs to do to be even better and we agree with your teachers about the most important things to do next. You can help by making sure that you follow up the advice your teachers give you. These are the two things that we have asked the adults to work on next.

- Help you to understand exactly what you have to do to make your work even better and give you time to do corrections or follow up the suggestions to improve your work.
- Make sure that the work for those of you who find learning more difficult helps you to achieve the targets in your individual plans.

Please thank your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires. We wish everyone at Brenzett School well in the future.

Best wishes

Mrs Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector