

East Brent Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123809
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	327994
Inspection date	18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	60
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	Dave Williams
Headteacher	Nikki Elsom
Date of previous school inspection	22 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road East Brent Highbridge TA9 4HZ
Telephone number	01278 760490
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The great majority of pupils in this small village school are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although higher in some year groups than others. There is more movement of pupils in and out of the school, other than at the customary times of joining or leaving, than in most schools. The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a combined Reception and Year 1 class. The school operates a breakfast club. The headteacher has been in post for less than one year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of East Brent Church of England First School is satisfactory. Parents are very enthusiastic about the supportive, caring ethos of the school. Pupils love coming to the school and feel very secure. A typical parental comment was, 'This is a lovely, caring village school.' The headteacher has been in post for less than a year. She has a clear vision of how the school can build on pupils' outstanding personal development by promoting more academic rigour and raising everyone's expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Pupils join the school with a wide range of individual starting points. Taking the intake as a whole, children's knowledge and skills are broadly at the levels expected on entry in most years. Although standards are average overall, they are higher in English than in other areas at the ages of both seven and nine. Standards in writing for both boys and girls have been particularly creditable in recent years, with many pupils making good progress in this area. Standards in mathematics are lower and pupils' progress is slower, although satisfactory, in this subject. This is largely because teachers have less confidence and expertise in teaching mathematics than in teaching writing. Throughout the school, a few more-able pupils are not achieving as well as they should. This is because teachers do not consistently provide appropriate challenge to meet the needs of more-able pupils. The headteacher recognises the need to raise expectations and develop more expertise, and has put appropriate strategies in place. For example, pupils who are more able in mathematics receive additional support, both within the school and in conjunction with other schools in the local cluster.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils love coming to school. Behaviour is excellent, and pupils participate fully in the broad range of activities both in school hours and after school. Physical education and music are particular strengths, and all pupils have the opportunity to go swimming. These features of the curriculum add much to pupils' tremendous enjoyment of school. Parents and pupils also confirm that East Brent is a very caring school which caters very well for the personal needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Many aspects of the attention to pupils' welfare, including the pastoral care, are extremely good. The school has recently developed a new system to track pupils' progress and set them individual targets. However, teachers are not yet using these targets effectively to drive up standards and achievement in lessons. There are no unsatisfactory lessons, but sometimes the teaching is insufficiently challenging for the needs of particularly able pupils, who say that the work is sometimes too easy. The marking of pupils' work is of inconsistent quality and does not give sufficient indication of how well pupils have done and how they can improve. The curriculum makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' progress.

Governors, several of them new, are enthusiastic, active, supportive and challenging to the school leadership team. The headteacher has a realistic perception of how the school can progress further, and this is reflected in planning which has appropriate priorities for improvement. Some strategies are already in place to improve the school's effectiveness, but they are too recent to be fully embedded. Therefore the school has a satisfactory, but improving, capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

It was not possible during the inspection to observe the small number of children in the Reception class because, along with their teacher, they were out of school. However, the evidence from planning, assessment and discussions with the headteacher confirmed that these children make good progress. The current reception children had stronger starting points than usual when they joined the school. Overall, they entered Reception with knowledge and skills a little above expectations for their age. As a result of good teaching, which encourages a balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities, they are achieving well. Their standards are securely above average now. This is evident, for example, in their developing early writing skills. Assessment of children's progress is now more secure than in previous years. As a result, the use of assessment to match teaching and activities to children's needs is now contributing to good progress. The children join enthusiastically with older pupils in Year 1 for some activities. Photographic evidence and assessment records show that children's personal development is outstanding. The level of resourcing, including the outside play area, is good. Parents are very pleased with the provision, particularly the high level of care for all children. There is good liaison between the school and parents, and also with the local pre-school and nursery, whose children regularly visit the Reception class. The provision for reception children is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teachers' confidence and expertise in the teaching of mathematics in order to raise standards in this subject.
- Ensure that teachers take full account of the targets set for pupils in lessons and, in particular, provide consistent challenge for the more-able pupils.
- Ensure that marking helps pupils to know how well they have done and how they can improve their work.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall standards are broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most year groups joined Year 1 with knowledge and skills at the levels expected for their age, but with relatively stronger writing and other communication skills. Many pupils progress well in English throughout Years 1 to 4, and above average standards in speaking and listening are a particular strength. In contrast, standards in mathematics are lower. Some more-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the range of their work throughout the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities sometimes make good progress when they receive specialist support, but overall they achieve satisfactorily along with other pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Excellent relationships are a feature of the school. Pupils develop as mature, confident and articulate individuals, well prepared for the next stage of their education despite having some weaknesses in numeracy

skills. Pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong and behaviour is excellent. They have a good understanding of why a healthy lifestyle is important and talk enthusiastically about healthy choices, such as in diet and exercise. They also feel very safe. Pupils have developed a strong awareness of lifestyles in other cultures through links with African communities. Closer to home, they take very good advantage of opportunities to show responsibility, valuing the role of the school council and very willingly helping others as buddies. Pupils also do a lot of work in the local community, for example through church-related activities. They enjoy all aspects of school, and particularly the trips such as the residential visit to an outdoor activities centre and visits to sites such as Caerleon. Attendance is currently in line with the national average, due to the absence of a very small number of pupils, although it is usually well above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although teaching is satisfactory overall and there is no unsatisfactory teaching, it is still variable in quality across different subjects, as confirmed both by the inspection and the school's own monitoring. This results in inconsistencies in learning. The teaching in English is well paced and often appropriately challenging. However, in lessons that are satisfactory, the pace is much slower. This was evident, for example, in a mathematics lesson in which the pupils spent too long on an addition activity which was also not sufficiently challenging for the more able. Some of the most-able pupils learn well when they get opportunities to work in a more challenging environment, such as on independent tasks and sometimes with older pupils. Some pupils with learning difficulties also benefit a good deal from the work of support staff. However, teachers' expectations are sometimes not sufficiently high for all pupils. Pupils report that they do not always know how well they are doing. Teachers' marking is not sufficiently informative, and teachers do not use pupils' targets well enough to match work to their needs and to help them to take the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school makes good links with other schools, for example to benefit from specialist teaching in physical education and French, and there are a number of opportunities to make music. The school is beginning to develop a curriculum which encourages meaningful links between various subjects. This includes, for example, some good opportunities for writing in other subjects but fewer quality links between mathematics and other subjects. There is a good programme for personal, moral and social education. However, curriculum planning does not take full account of the needs of pupils in those mixed-age classes which contain a wide range of ability, and so the more-able pupils are not consistently pushed on well enough. A strength of the curriculum is the range of after-school clubs and activities, in addition to a popular breakfast club. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the various clubs and the residential visit.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are very confident that the school meets their personal needs well, and their sense of security contributes significantly to their enjoyment and sense of well-being. There are robust

arrangements to ensure child protection and general safety. There are good links between the school and outside agencies, which help vulnerable pupils in particular. The school is very successful in quickly integrating pupils who join the school other than at the usual times. There are also arrangements with other schools to meet the needs of talented and gifted pupils. Pupils are very complimentary about the transition arrangements which make them confident about moving schools. The school has recently developed more effective academic support systems to regularly assess and track individual pupils as they move through the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has made a positive impact in the relatively short time she has been at the school. The school has coped well with staff changes and acquiring a mostly new governing body. Staff are beginning to benefit from good professional development opportunities, for example in gaining more expertise in mathematics, so that they can share responsibility for improving standards. The school also makes good use of its links with partner schools to further these opportunities for the benefit of both staff and pupils. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. As well as several opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school community through activities such as the school council and growing their own produce, pupils go out into the community, for example to sustain strong links with the local church. The school has extended pupils' awareness of other cultures through developing links with Uganda and Zambia.

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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?	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?	1
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?	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	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

18 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of East Brent Church of England First School, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 4HZ

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school recently. You talked to us very enthusiastically about your school and we know that you greatly enjoy attending lessons and the other activities which the school organises for you.

We agree with both you and your parents when you tell us that the school is a very welcoming, happy and secure place. Your teachers and other staff know you well and look after you carefully. You behave very well and are very good ambassadors for the school. We also know that you love activities such as the trips and residential visit.

At the moment, East Brent gives you a satisfactory standard of education. Although many of you learn well in some aspects of your work, particularly in English, you do not do as well in some other subjects such as mathematics. Some of you, particularly those of you who learn quickly, sometimes find the work rather easy. The headteacher understands this, and the school is working to make sure that you can all do your best. We believe that you will try hard to succeed because you are keen to learn.

We have asked the school to do three things to help you do even better. Firstly, we have asked the school to do its best to help you be better at mathematics. Secondly, we have asked your teachers to make sure that you always have work that is best suited to your needs. This is so that you can make quicker progress, especially those of you who can do really hard work. Thirdly, we have asked your teachers to give you more information when they mark your books, and use your targets more. This is so that you know exactly how well you are doing and how you can improve your work.

Thank you again for making our visit to your school so enjoyable, and good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Laver Lead inspector