

Bemerton St John Church of England Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126434
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	328497
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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 aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	165
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	William Snow
Headteacher	Cherie Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lower Road Bemerton Salisbury SP2 9NW
Telephone number	01722 322848

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
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Fax number

01722 502992

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. Numbers have fallen significantly after a previous steady rise. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught together in one class. Older pupils are taught in six relatively small classes each comprising one year group. The very large majority of pupils are White British and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is smaller than average. The governing body is new following the unscheduled resignation of the previous governing body in the summer of 2008. The chair of governors, appointed in July 2008, died two days before the inspection. The recently appointed vice-chair is serving as acting chair. Childcare provision before and after school is privately run within the school accommodation but is not the responsibility of the school's governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school is not led or managed effectively. Failure to follow all legally required safeguarding procedures means there is inadequate care, guidance and support. The local authority has been informed about this and is committed to taking appropriate action with immediate effect. In most other respects, provision in the school is satisfactory.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and by the end of the year reach levels of development expected for their ages. This satisfactory progress is maintained, although not entirely consistently, from one year group to the next and standards are average at the end of Years 2 and 6. A small proportion of the pupils, particularly those who are more able, do not make as much progress as they should. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some good teaching but inconsistencies remain. Activities for pupils are not always matched closely enough to the different needs of the pupils, leading to some pupils, often the most able, not being fully extended. Not all pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning and how they can improve. The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced and aspects are good, for example work related to the creative arts.

Teachers establish good relationships with the pupils and this helps contribute to the pupils' satisfactory personal development and well-being. Pupils behave well in lessons. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is above average and pupils enjoy most of their time in school. Although care, guidance and support are inadequate overall, in many ways the school promotes a caring atmosphere with most pupils reporting that they feel safe and happy at school. Academic guidance is satisfactory, with new systems being introduced, but is not implemented consistently enough to promote good progress throughout the school.

The school was slow to address aspects previously reported as being in need of improvement, and the actions taken have had relatively little impact. Attempts to communicate a clear sense of direction for the school have not been convincingly implemented. This is a concern of a significant minority of parents who responded to the inspectors' survey. The school's partnership with a sector of the parents remains uneasy and shows little sign of improvement since the previous inspection. There are shortcomings and confusions in management and organisation. These make it difficult for leaders, despite the best efforts of some, to operate effectively, thereby slowing decision making and school improvement. The governing body resigned in advance of a local authority review of the school, published in July 2008. New governors have been appointed and are beginning a training programme but, at this early stage, are not fulfilling all their responsibilities. The school carries out a range of checks on aspects of its performance. Whilst some of these are satisfactory, overall they are not effective in bringing about school improvement as there are big gaps in what is checked and they are frequently either not sustained or lack clarity regarding judgements. Improvement since the last inspection has been too slow.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children start school with a wide variation in the level of their skills but collectively these are broadly as expected for their age. They settle quickly into a calm and caring atmosphere after a short induction programme, which is kept flexible to meet the needs of specific individuals. A 'buddy' in Year 2 supports each child. The children make satisfactory progress across the six areas of learning, including in personal development, and reach expected levels by the end of the year. Last year a significant proportion made good progress in early language and literacy skills. A few made relatively slow progress in mathematical development. The careful deployment of the teaching assistants and good teamwork are strong factors in promoting the secure care and welfare of the children and are a feature of the satisfactory leadership and management of the teacher who moved into the Early Years Foundation Stage this year. Close links with parents are established before the children enter the class and are maintained during the year. The teacher plans a range of activities and experiences for the children but teaching and curriculum are satisfactory rather than good because too large a proportion of the activities are planned and directed by the adults. At times the children spend a lot of time together, for example on the carpet as a whole class, and there are insufficient opportunities for them to learn independently through play in the classroom or outside in the secure but small designated area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all the legal requirements related to safeguarding pupils are fully implemented and regularly checked.
- Strengthen the clarity of direction offered by the leadership, improving the effectiveness of communications and ensuring management tasks are carried out systematically.
- Ensure governors and staff leaders are trained and fully involved in implementing and sustaining rigorous checks on the success of the work of the school.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by matching work closely to the full range of pupils' abilities, including those who are more able, and ensuring pupils are clear about their next steps in learning.
- Establish an effective working partnership with all parents in order to improve their confidence and support for the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in the school. From overall expected levels on entry to school, standards are in line with expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and average at the end of Years 2 and 6, although with some variation from year to year. Standards rose significantly in Year 6 last year as a result of good teaching, returning to average levels, following a sharp decline the year before. The good progress established last year in Year 6 is being maintained. In Year 2 standards fell last year, with too few of the average and more able pupils fulfilling their potential. This year progress is accelerating in Year 2. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive extra help in some lessons and this enables them to make satisfactory progress. The school is aware that some pupils are not achieving as well as they should and is mindful of the need to increase the proportion of more able pupils exceeding national expectations. It has set ambitious end of year targets, and early indications show the increased rate of progress at the top of the school

is being sustained. There are improved and more effective systems for sharing assessment information between leaders and teachers and this is helping to raise awareness and expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Behaviour is good, particularly in lessons and when pupils are moving around inside the building. Pupils have a satisfactory awareness of safe practices, for example 'stranger danger' issues, but behaviour on the playground is too boisterous at times resulting in too many minor accidents. This worries a few pupils, as do arrangements for supervision at lunchtime and not always feeling listened to. Despite this, nearly all pupils enjoy most school experiences and attendance is above average. Pupils have a good understanding of what is right and wrong. Their moral and social development is good but their spiritual and cultural development, although satisfactory, is not as strongly promoted. There are too few opportunities for reflection and pupils have insufficient awareness of the cultural diversity of modern Britain. Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities around school. The school is striving to strengthen the 'pupils' voice', and the roles of school councillors and 'red hats' monitors are being developed along with a satisfactory range of opportunities to take part in wider community events. Pupils have a keen awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and physical exercise and the school has Healthy School and Activemark awards in recognition of good work in this aspect. Pupils' basic study skills are average, contributing to their satisfactory preparation for the next stage of education and adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There are examples of good teaching and learning but the school agrees that too much is satisfactory rather than good. The main reason for this is that expectations are not always high enough. Sometimes activities are not matched closely enough to the wide range of pupils' abilities, and the organisation of the lesson is such that more able pupils, for example, spend significant periods marking time during explanations or summaries with the whole class. This slows their learning. Some improved features are being introduced and developed but these are not applied consistently, for example the way teachers respond to and mark pupils' work. A consistently good feature is the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils in lessons. Another is the way teachers help pupils explain what they think they have learned, for example as seen at the end of a Year 6 mathematics lessons when pupils reviewed their understanding of decimals. There are relatively few teaching assistants compared with similar sized schools but when available they are deployed well, often to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enabling these pupils to be fully included and make sound gains in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced and includes the subjects required for the different age groups but there is no clear approach to ensure the progression of skills is planned systematically, and this restricts progress. Innovative materials are being introduced with positive

effects on how pupils' personal development is being promoted, and the school has the Artsmark Gold award in recognition of the rich arts experiences provided. These contribute to the good enrichment opportunities that also include 'Global week' and residential visits that the pupils report enjoying a lot. Opportunities for pupils to use computers are satisfactory. The curriculum is frequently adapted well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but not always effectively adapted to meet those of the more able.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 4

Many aspects of care, guidance and support are satisfactory and a few are good, but overall they are inadequate because of the very significant gaps in implementing several legal requirements designed to safeguard pupils; these relate specifically to ensuring that all staff are properly checked and child protection training is carried out regularly. These gaps are caused by slack leadership and management processes and do not reflect the general commitment of staff towards the pupils. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory and there is good support for specific and vulnerable pupils who have particular needs. Effective links with external partners help to support the particular needs of these pupils. Other pupils contribute to this by volunteering to help where they see a need. The school is aware of the high number of accidents on the playground. It introduced a few changes designed to improve supervision but has not kept up any monitoring to check what difference they have made. The satisfactory academic guidance is being strengthened by the improved tracking of pupils' progress, but recently introduced strategies for sharing short-term learning targets are not being implemented consistently.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

In several important aspects, the actions taken in response to issues raised in the previous inspection have not had any sustained impact. Strategic leadership and direction are heavily reliant on recent support from the local authority. The headteacher is supported well by other leaders and staff, but planning and routine day-to-day organisation are weak. Examples of this include there being no systematic procedure for agreeing and setting the agenda in advance of senior leadership team meetings and almost no records kept of decisions made or actions to be followed up. This makes it very difficult for the senior leadership team to function effectively in promoting school improvement or for the school to demonstrate value for money in a school with a significant, but declining, deficit budget.

There has been little progress since the last inspection in building a working partnership with a sector of the parents. More than one third of the parents who responded to the inspectors' survey expressed concerns about the leadership and management of the school, with several referring to their lack of confidence or respect. In other ways the school is working effectively to promote community cohesion locally and internationally, for example through 'family learning weeks' and 'global weeks'.

The acting chair of governors has been very active in and around the school since becoming a governor, including helping the headteacher in monitoring teaching and learning. The new governing body has met frequently in order to start becoming familiar with its responsibilities and gain a view of the school, but not all the committees have met. Governor training has

begun and more is planned. Official school files related to governors' business are incomplete and muddled, making it difficult to access key information, and governors do not have robust systems to check that their policies are being implemented. Individual governors, in conversations with inspectors, described the school's leadership and management as 'chaotic' and 'not well organised' which underpins the school's lack of capacity to improve.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	4

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

28 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Bemerton St John Church of England Primary School, Salisbury SP2 9NW

This letter is to tell you what we found out when we visited your school. I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome, for being helpful and polite throughout the two days and telling us about the things you like and your ideas for how the school could be improved.

Here are some of the good things we found. You behave well, especially in lessons and when moving around inside the building, for example when going to assembly. Some of you get a bit too excited when running around on the playground. This means there are more accidents than there might be and this concerns your teachers and us. You told us that you enjoy most things in school and we found that you are good at coming to school every day. We were pleased that you know how important it is to stay healthy through eating sensibly and doing lots of exercise. We were impressed by the ideas from your school councillors, for example to introduce a drinking fountain, and the way 'buddies' and 'red hats' help to look after other children.

While there are some good things about the school, we feel it needs some extra support to help give you the best possible education. We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on several things. Local experts will be coming in to help them. The staff look after you during your time in school but there are some things that the school does not do properly. We have also asked the adults to improve the way they check up on how well the school is doing. The leaders need to be clear about how they plan to improve the school and the way new ideas are introduced. It would help if all the paperwork was organised better. When planning interesting things for you to do in class, teachers need to be very careful to ensure work is always not too hard or too easy for you and to find more ways to help you understand what it is you need to do to improve. Most, but by no means all, of your parents are pleased with the school. We have asked the leaders to find more ways to improve the partnership between all parents and the school.

Your headteacher, staff and governors want the school to continue to improve. You can help by being extra careful out in the playground and telling your teachers if you think your work is a bit too easy or if you are not quite sure about how you can improve it.

I hope that you all do well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin Kerly

Lead inspector