

Old Bexley Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101452
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	335721
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Hodge

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	678
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Allen
Headteacher	Peter M Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 29 lessons or parts of lessons and 24 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, groups of pupils, teachers and support staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation including those relating to safeguarding, school improvement plans and those relating to the provision for pupils with autism. The inspectors analysed the questionnaires returned from 258 parents and carers, 100 pupils and 28 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- provision for outdoor activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- teaching and pupils' achievement in writing and mathematical work
- the care, guidance and support for pupils, particularly for those pupils with severe learning difficulties
- how senior leaders, including governors, drive school improvement and their capacity to improve.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than is normally found. The pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/disabilities is below average but the school has specialist provision for eight pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Other pupils with learning difficulties have a range of needs such as speech, language, and physical difficulties. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has awards for promoting pupils' healthy living and active lifestyles. The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery and three Reception classes.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

'We really like school', 'enjoy all the activities', and 'everyone cares for each other' were typical comments from the pupils at this good school. Its outstanding care, guidance and support results in pupils behaving brilliantly, feeling extremely secure and motivated to learn.

Observations conducted by inspectors confirm that pupils reach very high attainment levels due to the good progress they make through the school from their starting points. The pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science has been consistently very high in recent years and some pupils are now taking tests to see if they can reach levels that would normally be typical of pupils in the early years of secondary school. Small variations between classes and results reached between girls and boys were not evident from their day-to-day work and pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and the specialist provision enables those pupils taught within it to do particularly well.

Consistently good teaching through the school helps pupils achieve well. On occasions achievement is outstanding when lessons are taught to a very high standard. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching is good rather than outstanding, as some activities are taught too formally or not planned for children to have an appropriate degree of choice. The small size of the shared outside areas makes physical activities and learning more difficult to organise. Although the outcomes for children are generally good, this hinders some aspects of their physical and creative development. In Years 1 to 6 teachers make learning fun while keeping a firm eye on maintaining pupils' well-developed basic skills. In this respect the curriculum is systematic and well planned, and the school's plans for creative activities are developing well in most, though not all classes.

Underpinning the success of the school are the commitment and effectiveness of senior leaders who have helped staff to work well as a team. As a consequence of this, there are the very high levels of care and guidance, particularly for those pupils with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This, together with excellent levels of spiritual, moral and social awareness, complements the values set by this church school. Pupils develop a good awareness of other cultures and beliefs helped by close links with a school in Malawi and local links within the immediate community. The school's promotion of community cohesion is very good and falls just short of being outstanding as pupils' knowledge of different cultures and peoples in the wider regions of the United Kingdom is not as secure. Clear self-evaluation, based on a wide range of evidence from staff, pupils and analysis of pupils' progress has helped the school generate a clear set of priorities for improvement. Initiatives to extend pupils' writing abilities are already

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working effectively. The governing body aids the process of improvement by visiting regularly to gauge progress and is seeking ways to extend its contacts with parents and carers. This, combined with senior leaders maintaining the school's good performance over time, means the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' independence, physical and creative abilities in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - extending the outdoor provision where possible
 - planning more opportunities which enable children to plan their own open-ended activities and learning
- Extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and backgrounds of different groups of people in this country by:
 - developing the existing link with a local contrasting school population to include more year groups in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school and are mature, brilliantly behaved members of the school community. Their concern for others is reflected in the way they link with a partner school in Malawi and in their 'Hats for Haiti' day which raised £3,000 for the earthquake appeal. Pupils keep active at playtimes and when using the wide range of after-school clubs, with cricket being a current favourite for nearly 100 pupils. Many pupils take eating sensibly seriously, although some admit to finding it difficult to maintain healthy eating habits. Each class having their own vegetable patch is making them aware of the range of healthy choices available. Pupils' good personal development is complemented by their high academic achievement. Their basic skills in writing, number work, science and information and communication technology are well above average. Well taught lessons foster their problem-solving skills, such as in a Year 5 lesson, where pupils solved a variety of 'real-life' number problems and in a Year 4 lesson, where pupils' knowledge of persuasive writing was extended by using simple animation techniques. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of clear diagnosis of their needs and the support provided. The pupils with autistic spectrum disorders often achieve outstandingly well as activities allow them to learn in meaningful ways both within classes and individually. The very small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups also achieve well as they are well integrated into school life. Their high levels of basic skills mean pupils' preparation for their future lives is good, but it falls just short of being excellent as their entrepreneurial skills or knowledge of simple business approaches are not developed to the same high degree.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Consistently good teaching through the school is ensuring pupils make good progress with few variations between classes. Those lessons taught to the highest level enable pupils to gain deep insights into issues and foster pupils' basic skills to a sophisticated degree. Practical 'hands on' activities are planned frequently and those pupils needing extra support are catered for effectively by well-briefed teaching assistants. Those children with autism are given good one-to-one support, usually within lessons, which enables them to participate fully in lesson activities and learn effectively. Pupils' writing and number skills are used well within other subjects as are their problem-solving skills in science. In otherwise well taught lessons, pupils sometimes work too passively when teachers' explanations are too lengthy. In others the aims of the lesson are not always as sharply focused on what are the key intentions for pupils' learning. These weaknesses are, however, in the minority and contrasted sharply with the strengths seen in most teaching, for example in an outstandingly well taught lesson where pupils quickly set about planning a simple play based on a live performance watched a few days earlier. Teachers mark work regularly and give clear guidance to pupils about how they can improve it. Homework books help pupils record weekly targets to guide improvement. The systematically planned curriculum helps teachers provide activities which give pupils a broad range of experiences, while ensuring high academic skills. Extra-curricular activities, ranging from arts, crafts and sport and an annual ski trip to Austria, help

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

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broaden the pupils' horizons. All pupils benefit from excellent levels of care, guidance and support. This results in pupils' high satisfaction with nearly all aspects of the school, and noted in the questionnaires returned to inspectors. They feel particularly secure and are very confident that their concerns and worries are listened to. Simple 'worry' boxes, playground buddies and high levels of supervision at playtimes all aid their sense of safety. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well catered for. The standard of care in the specialist autism provision is of an exemplary nature, and parents and carers speak highly of the way staff care, guide and support the children. Effective links with parents and carers before children start school and close contact with local secondary schools help pupils feel confident about the next stage of their school life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Effective leadership and management have maintained the good performance of the school since the last inspection. A good start to school through improved Nursery provision is paying dividends and the school self-evaluation highlights the need to concentrate on improvement to aspects of outdoor provision in the Reception classes. In some aspects, such as pupils' care, the school is extremely successful at catering for all pupils' needs, regardless of their backgrounds. The good team work, which staff confirmed in their responses to inspectors, contributes to the smooth running of the school. All staff help to ensure that equal opportunities are provided for pupils and discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils with autism are particularly well served by high levels of organisation to ensure their welfare and learning needs are met. Safeguarding procedures, including the vetting of staff, is carried to a high degree and pupils' responses confirmed the school is successful in this area of its work. Governors visit the school regularly to keep their 'finger on the pulse' of initiatives, but do not always record the outcomes of these visits consistently. A recent 'meet the governors' evening enabled staff and governors to exchange views more directly. The governing body identifies areas where they want to improve, which include setting up a 'parents' forum' to help guide further improvements. Although there is a need to develop this area of their education further, pupils know about their local and global communities through links with schools in Malawi and France which have been used to broaden their horizons very effectively.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a smooth start to school in the Nursery where their welfare and well-being are promoted well allowing them to gain confidence in playing, socialising and role play. The Nursery's outside 'zoo' caused much excitement with 'zoo keepers', 'wardens' and 'receptionists' all acting out their roles with enthusiasm. Adults ensure that children have a good variety of experiences and one-to-one help with early reading skills prepares them well for their next classes. In the Reception classes, teaching is good in giving children a variety of activities, which promote their early skills in number, reading and language. The limited outdoor spaces, which all three classes share, mean that not enough activities are planned which give children opportunities to engage in activities they can choose for themselves. This tends to result in activities that in themselves are well taught, but do not make the most of children's natural curiosity to explore and develop their independence. Children develop early number skills well and they enjoy practical activities, such as sorting and recognising the value of coins. Limited room for equipment, means there is no climbing frame or space to use large wheeled toys. This weakness is partly compensated for by the ingenuity of staff, but the pupils' physical and creative development is hindered as a result of the limited space to use their equipment or to have more frequent opportunities to choose activities, such as role play, independently. The school wants this stage of its work to be outstanding and recognises that these changes are necessary if its goal is to be realised. From the average starting points most children are on track to reach and/or exceed most of the expected levels, but their creative and physical abilities need further improvement. The

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leadership and management are good. The school has clearly focused upon diagnosing weaker areas of provision, such as the outside space, but has still been effective in developing other aspects of Nursery provision and in ensuring the children have an enjoyable start to school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a good response to the parents' questionnaire. There were around a quarter which had comments which often contained both praise and points for improvement. The school's friendly and welcoming ethos was consistently referred to and the way in which the school helps pupils become well behaved and polite children. The inspectors agree that the school promotes outstanding behaviour from the pupils and that they are, with very few exceptions, happy in school. There were a number of parents and carers with some specific concerns over their individual children and their experiences, but there was a consistent theme of some parents and carers wanting to have more frequent communication about their children's progress and in communication in general. The inspectors investigated these concerns and found that the school offers a pattern of meetings during the year that is typical of most schools as well as regular newsletters, face-to-face meetings, homework books and social events to aid communication. The governors and senior leaders recognise that the number of parents and carers is high which can make making contact more difficult. They want to improve the school even more and so have plans to give parents and carers more opportunities to voice their concerns and pointers for improvement as they seek to become an outstanding school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Old Bexley Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 258 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 678 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	188	73	69	27	1	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	185	72	71	28	1	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	95	37	146	57	15	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	119	46	126	49	10	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	154	60	95	37	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	117	45	121	47	14	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	132	51	124	48	2	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	96	37	130	50	11	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	114	44	133	52	4	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	120	47	122	47	9	3	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	105	41	132	51	9	3	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	152	59	101	39	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	161	62	91	35	5	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Bexley Church of England Primary School, Bexley DA5 3JR

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. The vast majority of your parents and carers think your school is good and we agree.

Here are some of the things we found out:

- The youngest children settle particularly well in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- All of you behave brilliantly and try hard in lessons.
- You reach very high levels in your work when you leave and achieve particularly well in artistic and sporting activities.
- You are good at keeping yourselves fit and in eating very sensibly.
- The staff make your parents and carers feel part of what goes on in the school and your contributions to school and the local community are also good.
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult or have a particular learning difficulty to achieve well
- The teaching is good and sometimes excellent, which helps you to learn well.
- The teaching is good and sometimes excellent, which helps you to learn well
- The headteacher, staff and governing body run the school well and really care about you so you feel safe and happy.

We have asked the school to do two things to help it improve further:

- Give those children in Reception classes more room to play outside so that they can have more equipment and choice to use their physical abilities to extend learning.
- Develop more links with other schools in this country so you get to find out about other children who live in a contrasting area that may have a different way of life to you.

You can help too by continuing to get on really well with each other so your school remains a happy place to learn.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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