

Bonnars CE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114511
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	338386
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Cottingham
Headteacher	Miss Marion Ponting
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited six lessons and an assembly, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, as well as meeting informally with parents at the beginning of the day. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, teachers' planning and assessment information, the school development plan and the arrangements for safeguarding children. In addition, 40 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- The quality of pupils' writing in all classes, and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- How well pupils do in Key Stage 1.
- The effectiveness of the school's arrangements to care for and support pupils.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than most primary schools. It serves the village of Maresfield and surrounding areas. The majority of pupils are from White British families with a few from minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy Roma backgrounds. Above average proportions of pupils join and leave the school part way through their primary education. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who hold a statement of special educational needs, is high. There is a broad range of needs. Most pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. Over the last two years many classes have had a number of temporary teachers because of staff illness, staffing changes and extended leave. The school is now fully staffed with permanent appointments. In recognition of its work, the school has Healthy School, Active Mark and Dyslexia Friendly School awards.

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

Bonners CE is a good school. It has improved well since the last inspection and now has some outstanding aspects to its work, particularly in the way the headteacher and staff work closely with families to ensure that pupils are cared for extremely well. This was recognised in a parental comment: 'One of the school's key strengths is the pastoral system for the whole child and his or her family.' Pupils are articulate and polite, and exceptionally proud of their school. Their views are shared by parents who made many positive and encouraging comments, including, 'Bonners is a wonderful school', 'As a family, we consider ourselves very fortunate to have a child at Bonners', and 'We moved area. My child joined the school late and has really blossomed.' The strong links with the church and the school's Christian ethos are seen in the family atmosphere, pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the respect pupils show for one another. Each pupil is known and valued. As a result of the emphasis placed on promoting pupils' personal development, pupils have a good understanding of how to take care of themselves, and an acute awareness of the needs of others.

Pupils achieve well across a broad and interesting curriculum. Children in Reception get off to a good start and benefit from working alongside Year 1 pupils. They are well settled into the school's routines and are making good progress in the early stages of formal education. Good teaching through the rest of the school helps pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to achieve well. Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is generally a little below national averages, but by the time pupils leave in Year 6, attainment is above average. Pupils' attainment in mathematics has not been as strong as in English, and the school rightly attributes this to the difficulty some pupils have in applying their numeracy skills to solving problems. Changes made to the teaching of writing have had a positive impact, so that in the Year 6 tests in 2009 pupils' writing was better than their reading. However, staff rightly believe that pupils can still do better and are focusing on giving them more opportunities to write at greater length and use their literacy skills more in other subjects.

The school accurately sums itself up in the school prospectus: 'Behind the Victorian walls lies the creative and stimulating environment of a modern and active school.' The headteacher and governors provide clear and strong leadership. Staff morale is high, teamwork is good and adults have a shared view of how to make further improvements. The success of actions already taken, for example to improve the quality of writing, shows that these are well judged and give the school a good capacity for further improvement. Because of the number of staff changes, there are some minor inconsistencies in practice across the school, such as in the way marking identifies how

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work can be improved, and senior leaders are tackling these.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' writing and numeracy skills by:
 - embedding more writing tasks across the curriculum
 - developing pupils' thinking skills to solve problems in mathematics.
- Ensure that marking routinely gives pupils advice on how work can be further improved and provide opportunities to follow up the guidance given.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When asked about their school, pupils' first response was that 'learning is fun'. They particularly appreciate the encouragement they are given, for example, that teachers make learning interesting and that awards are given for attendance and eating healthily. Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles. Playtimes are very active for all, and older pupils develop leadership skills well by organising games for younger children. This is only one example of pupils' exceptional contribution to the community. Pupils are strongly supportive of village activities, for example by making a 'Creation' banner for the church or participating in the local drama group. Pupils often mark the end of a 'learning journey' with an activity shared with local residents. For example, pupils organised a 'make do and mend' fashion show and 'street party' attended by villagers at the end of their Second World War study. Pupils' understanding of the era was strengthened when older members of the village community shared their memories of childhood and service during the war. School councillors carry out regular focused discussions with other pupils about choices for charity work and how school life can be improved, helping all to learn about citizenship and develop skills which will stand them in good stead in the future.

Pupils know that their views are listened to. For example, they helped to choose the new uniform and wear it with great pride. They respond well to the school's high expectations and motivating lessons, and behave well. They speak of how well they get on together and know how to sort out difficulties for themselves. Pupils' good social skills and ability to work collaboratively help them to feel confident about their future education.

Because year groups are small and cohorts have very different levels of additional needs, attainment varies from year to year. Attainment in the Year 6 national tests has been securely above the national average for the last four years, representing good progress for pupils when taking account of their starting points and any learning difficulties. Improvements since the last inspection have been stronger in English than in mathematics. However, the gap narrowed in 2009, although pupils do not yet make as much progress in numeracy as they do in their reading and writing. Attainment has been more variable in the Year 2 assessments, but school data shows that pupils currently in Key Stage 1 are doing well and making good progress from their starting points. The

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introduction of a new handwriting policy is helping pupils to write with greater fluency and making a good contribution to improving English standards throughout the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Good teaching and a well-planned curriculum successfully motivate pupils. Good relationships with adults and the very positive environment for learning do much to build pupils' self esteem. A parent commented on how motivating the displays of pupils' work around the school are for pupils. Teachers give pupils tasks which involve them actively in their learning. Group work is managed well to ensure that all pupils participate fully, often astutely supported by experienced teaching assistants. Teachers manage the wide range of abilities and mixed ages of pupils in their classes well, although sometimes the teacher's introduction is too long to keep all pupils fully engaged throughout. They set work at differing levels of challenge which effectively meets pupils' needs because teachers have an accurate understanding of how well each pupil is doing. Marking is regular, gives pupils good encouragement and mostly indicates how pupils could improve their work. However, this is not consistent and pupils are not always given

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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opportunities to follow up on the advice given. By contrast, learning objectives and targets for pupils to achieve are consistently used. Over time this helps pupils to develop a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they have to do to improve. The curriculum effectively develops knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects in addition to establishing basic literacy and numeracy skills. Many subjects linked as 'learning journeys' make work interesting for pupils. As one parent commented, 'My child comes home every day with something new to tell me about what they have been up to', while another wrote about how pupils 'enjoy the creative aspects of their education'. Some useful opportunities are used for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in the context of other subjects. Teachers understand that there is still potential to increase the range of writing tasks pupils undertake in this way. The school provides valuable activities to challenge more-able pupils, often linking with other local primary and secondary schools. The range of enrichment activities within lessons, clubs and residential experiences promotes pupils' personal development effectively. A few boys said that they want more sport, but the collaborative arrangements for sport with the local secondary school give pupils good opportunities for a school of this size. Adults know pupils' needs well. High-quality pastoral care is central to the school's values and ethos and ensures that pupils are happy and safe. Staff, guided expertly by the headteacher, work closely with parents to ensure that pupils' individual needs, whether academic or emotional, are met. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly and a range of appropriate programmes are used to give individuals or small groups support as soon as additional needs are identified.

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?

The success of the determined leadership of the headteacher is seen in the steady improvement in standards since the last inspection. The prompt and focused action taken to address disruption caused by staff changes ensured that pupils' progress was not compromised. The governing body has audited the way in which it carries out its responsibilities and members are engaged in a training programme to develop their roles further. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas requiring further development. Governors and all staff are fully involved in improvement-planning. Teachers holding curriculum responsibilities are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and carefully prioritise actions which will make the greatest contribution to pupils'

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attainment. This attention to equality of opportunity is effectively ensuring that all groups of pupils, whatever their background or abilities, make good progress from their starting points. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. Vulnerable pupils are identified at an early stage and given the extra support they need.

The way in which the school places itself firmly at the heart of village life makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Pupils enthusiastically join in local activities and the curriculum gives them a good knowledge of different cultures across the world. The school is taking carefully considered action to forge links with pupils from more diverse backgrounds within Britain. Current consultations to extend the school buildings to provide more nursery and out-of-school care indicate the school's commitment and thoughtful approach to providing the best possible opportunities for children in the village.

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	1
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	2
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

Good, rich provision and effective leadership mean that children in the Reception Year get off to a good start. The curriculum effectively enables them to learn to make appropriate choices and to become independent. Their activities are stimulating and give them access to a wide range of new experiences, such as the use of glitter 'moon sand' and 'space centre' as part of the current light and dark theme. Children have a good understanding of issues relating to their own safety; for example, they know to put on coats when going outside and not to use equipment which is slippery in damp weather. Significant improvements have been made to the outdoor area and it is used well in all

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weathers. Further investment is planned to enhance storage so that children can improve their physical development by using more equipment outdoors. Cohorts vary greatly from year to year, and children join with a wide range of skills. Taken as a whole, children's skills are below those expected for their age when they start school because a minority of children have significant weaknesses in their language and communication skills. Children are taught well. Good attention by skilled teaching assistants effectively encourages children to talk about what they are doing, which helps their development alongside the teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills. Staff monitor children's progress closely and effectively plan work to meet their changing needs so that their attainment when they start Year1 is broadly in line with average.

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

The overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school, indicating the school's very strong partnership and communication with parents. Very few parents raised concerns and these related to individual issues. A few parents of pupils who have joined the school recently commented on how well their children had settled in and are making good progress in all aspects of school life. A small number of parents commented specifically on the breadth of the curriculum which gives pupils 'an excellent knowledge of the world and different cultures'. The strongest praise was given to work of the staff and the school's pastoral care. One parental comment summarised the views expressed by many others in referring to 'the school's wonderfully intimate approach to the child not just as an individual, but as a member of a family and wider community'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bonners CE 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 40 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 89 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	63	15	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	60	14	35	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	45	22	55	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	53	19	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	26	65	14	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	60	16	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	48	21	53	0	0	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)	20	50	17	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	53	19	48	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	40	22	55	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	45	7	43	3	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	50	17	43	3	8	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	63	15	38	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



13 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Bonners CE School, Maresfield, TN22 2EG

Thank you for the warm welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and found our conversations with you very helpful in finding out a lot about the school.

Bonners is a good school.

- You have a really good range of exciting and interesting activities and these help you to enjoy your time in school.
- You work hard in lessons and make good progress because you know how to improve your work.
- Your teachers and other adults look after you extremely well so that you are safe and learn how to take care of yourselves.
- The school councillors undertake their roles very conscientiously to make sure that each pupil in the school has a chance to say what can be improved further.
- You know how to live healthy lifestyles and you are very active at playtimes.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community by joining in village activities.
- You take part in a good range of clubs and every one has something of interest.
- The headteacher runs the school well and plans things with other adults to make it even better.

We agree with your teachers about the things they should do that will help you to do even better, particularly in literacy and numeracy:

- Give you more writing tasks in your 'learning journeys' to improve your ability to write at greater length.
- Help you to improve your problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Make sure that you are able to show that you understand the advice teachers give you when they mark your work.

You can help by making sure that you continue to work hard.

Please thank your parents for returning the questionnaires. It was very helpful to hear their views. We wish you every success in the future.

Mrs Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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