

Bulphan Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115092
Local Authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	338507
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Peter Sudworth

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	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Janet McCheyne
Headteacher	Miss Deborah Henley (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2007
School address	Fen Lane Bulphan Upminster
Telephone number	01375 891220
Fax number	01375 892648
Email address	admin@bulphanprimary.thurrock.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2010
Inspection number	338507

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, one of whom spent just half a day in the school to inspect safeguarding arrangements. The lead inspector spent one-third of his time looking at learning; eight lessons were observed and three teachers seen. The inspectors held meetings with the chair and vice-chair of governors, the acting headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and a group of pupils. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, for example those relating to safeguarding, curriculum organisation and information to track pupils' progress. They also looked at samples of pupils' work. Responses from 21 parent and carer questionnaires, and some from staff and pupils, were analysed.

The lead inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the reasons for science having been a weaker subject in Key Stage 2 over recent years, the school's efforts to improve this provision and the impact
- arrangements and their effectiveness for the mixed-age classes across the school
- the reasons for difference in the rates of progress between Key Stage 1 and 2
- the effectiveness of leadership and management systems given the frequent changes of headteacher
- the attention given to community cohesion.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average primary school with three classes, all of mixed-ages. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is around the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also about the national average. These pupils mainly have learning difficulties. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are lower than usually found. The school has had five headteachers in ten years. A part-time acting headteacher (three days a week) was in post at the time of the inspection pending a resolution of the current vacancy. Supply teachers are currently covering for a long-term absence in the class with the oldest pupils.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has experienced severe staffing problems this year and also in the past, including a series of headteachers. These changes have hindered the development of whole school systems and the consistency in pupils' performance, particularly at Key Stage 1 but also in different subjects.

Pupils enjoy school but, while most parents are happy with the school, they express mixed views about the provision and show much concern about the staffing difficulties, particularly relating to the leadership situation. One parent's view sums up the majority of parents' feelings well. She writes, 'I am extremely happy that my child is able to attend such a lovely, small village school. However, being so small we constantly have problems employing and keeping teachers, especially a headteacher.' Meanwhile, the school is benefiting from the temporary headteacher appointment. Despite the difficulties, pupils achieve satisfactorily and, in the main, reach standards around those expected for their age. Attainment in mathematics has been weaker in the recent past partly because too much use is made of workbooks. Attainment in science, which was previously a weakness, has improved.

The pupils have a good appreciation of healthy and safe living and feel safe in school. They are well cared for and the pupils confirm this. The pupils have a satisfactory understanding and involvement in community matters both within school and also in the local community. They enjoy taking part in 'Bulphan in Bloom.' They show satisfactory attitudes to learning but could sometimes get more work completed and take greater pride in its neatness and presentation. They are not always sure how they can improve their work and what they must do to get to the next level in their learning.

Teaching is satisfactory. Insufficient use is made of assessments to match the work to pupils' needs, particularly in mathematics, and tracking information is not always used to best advantage. Help is being given to the Early Years Foundation Stage where it is recognised further developments are needed in planning, the organisation of resources and the general quality of the environment in order to ensure that these children get off to a really good start. Children in the Reception class do not yet develop independence and responsibility well enough.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection given all the circumstances. The governing body's good commitment to the school, the school's recent more accurate self-evaluation and the pupils' satisfactory rates of progress indicate that the school shows a sound capacity to improve further. The temporary arrangements are holding together well and ensuring that the school continues to

provide a satisfactory education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' understanding and rate of progress in mathematics by:
 - making less use of workbooks and engaging the pupils in more practical activities to assist their understanding
 - making better use of assessment to match the work to pupils' abilities
 - ensuring that pupils work more rigorously in lessons and set out their work neatly to support accuracy.
- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - planning the purpose of the activities more carefully and making better use of practical resources
 - keeping the environment fresh so that the children have more opportunities to choose for themselves and explore in their learning
 - teaching the children to accept more responsibility for keeping the environment tidy
 - setting out the resources so that the children become more independent and can obtain their own.
- Making better use of records, data analysis and targets so that:
 - assessment is used more effectively to plan work for different pupils' needs
 - teachers become more accountable for the children's progress through the tracking process
 - pupils are more aware of how they can improve and what they need to do to get to the next level in their learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils begin school with skills and understanding that are typical for their ages. They make satisfactory progress in reaching average standards by Year 6 although there has been inconsistency in rates of progress by Year 2. Pupils have not always reached their potential in the younger age groups sometimes as a result of staffing difficulties. The current group of Year 2 pupils is on track to meet expectations for their age as are the oldest pupils. Science has been a weaker subject in the school because pupils did not have enough opportunities to engage in investigative activities but there has been a recent significant upturn as a result of better provision. Mathematics is a relatively weaker subject. Too much use of mathematics workbooks which do not demand enough of the pupils' thinking are partly responsible but staff have also not matched the work

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

precisely enough to individual pupils' needs. Furthermore, the setting out of work does not always encourage good levels of accuracy. New initiatives to support pupils' writing skills have contributed positively to pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils make best progress in reading because of home support, the opportunities to read in school and the use of the small but well organised library. Overall results have been rising in Year 6 in the last three years but this does not reflect the picture in different subjects where there have been some differences in attainment between subjects. All groups of pupils make similar rates of progress.

Pupils enjoy school. They say that there is always someone around in school to whom they can talk if they have a problem. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example by not accepting lifts from strangers. They have a good appreciation of healthy lifestyles and engage in frequent activities that involve exercise. The school council plays a satisfactory role in the school's affairs and in the past has suggested a canopy and seating for the playground. Pupils sometimes engage fruitfully in local matters and they supported the police in a project to warn motorists about speeding. Pupils show respect for others but both pupils and parents indicate that a few pupils do not always behave as well as others. Attendance is at the national average. Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their future education. Assemblies support pupils' spiritual development well and they take part enthusiastically in the singing. Their appreciation of different cultures globally and in the United Kingdom is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

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

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The lack of stability in staffing and leadership has hindered the forward thrust of teaching and learning. The pupils adapt well to the changes but the impact of staffing changes is sometimes seen in leisurely attitudes. As a result, pupils do not always accomplish as much work as they might. Teachers manage the pupils well and there are respectful relationships between staff and pupils. The pupils are cooperative and most listen well and so they know what they have to do. Marking is up-to-date and often helpful but teachers' expectations are not always high enough in the work that they give the pupils. Teachers often use modern technology and resources well to present their lessons. In a Year 3/ 4 science lesson about circuitry, the teacher explained electric circuits clearly through using the electronic white board before the pupils made their own circuits with a switch. Pupils enjoy active learning and cooperate well with others in groups. They profit well when they engage in paired discussions to think about particular ideas.

The curriculum is planned satisfactorily for the mixed-age classes in order to avoid repetition but it relies substantially on published materials. Satisfactory use is made of literacy and numeracy in different learning contexts. Links between other subjects are limited. The teachers give satisfactory attention to information and communications technology (ICT) but there are missed opportunities to extend pupils' ICT skills through its use in different subjects. The good range of extra-curricular activities for the size of the school promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles well. While good attention is given to numeracy and literacy, creative subjects such as music, art and design and design and technology do not always get enough attention. The occasional use of visits, such as to the National History Museum, and of visitors to the school, such as the local police, provides useful opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge at first hand.

The very good links with other agencies, such as speech and language therapists, support pupils well who have particular needs. Records of pupils who may be vulnerable are maintained most carefully. The staff provide good pastoral support for these pupils, each of whom has a key person. First-aid arrangements are good. Health and safety is considered well. The school has effective induction arrangements for pupils new to the school, including home visits, and parents contribute a good deal of information to the staff to help their children settle quickly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The instability of the leadership arrangements has weighed heavily on parents and governors but the temporary headteacher has provided a firm steer to keep the school stable in difficult times. The school development plan has been updated so that there is a clear thrust on raising attainment and strengthening management systems and aspects of work to promote more effective learning. Changes in staffing and leadership limit the drive for improvement and the embedding of ambition.

The governing body has audited the school's provision for community cohesion, identified aspects that need to be tackled but has yet to formulate a plan to move this aspect forward. Some governors visit through links with classes and others have subject links. They report back which helps the governing body to keep abreast of the school's development. The governing body has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They appreciate the parents' concerns about the school's management and are hastening towards a resolution of the problem through different possible routes.

The school's close link with another school under the previous joint headship arrangement eased a heavy load of subject responsibilities and duties. The school is still adjusting to the suspension of that link following the previous headteacher's resignation. It is still too early to judge the staff's response to these very recent changes.

Procedures and policies for safeguarding are consistent and methodical and training is up to date. Governors are very aware of safeguarding issues and set a secure framework for the leadership in this regard. The school promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily. Provision in class meets pupils' needs, although some of the extra-curricular provision is fee-paying which does not enable all pupils to access all the opportunities available. The school's self-evaluation is under review. Recently revised judgements on certain aspects of the school are accurate and have involved governors and this has helped to address issues better. Previous evaluations were too generous.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children usually make satisfactory progress in reaching the expectations for the end of the Reception year in all areas of their learning from the level when they enter which is as expected. Staffing difficulties affected the Foundation Stage Profile results adversely in 2009 and there was a lack of evidence to support external moderation procedures. These same children have since caught up in Year 1. Teaching and leadership are currently satisfactory. Evidence to support the children's learning is now being maintained regularly and records maintained of their progress. New staff are being increasingly successful in managing Reception children in the combined setting with older children. Reception children demonstrated accurate counting of the segments on 'The Hungry Caterpillar' they had made and showed good skill in making mathematical patterns. The staff make good use of published ideas to provide for children within such a wide age range. Nevertheless, planning is not always strong enough in mapping out resources for the Early Years Foundation Stage children to achieve desired learning outcomes and keeping a daily freshness which engages children's enthusiasm and interest in learning. The outside area, although with a cover, has very limited space. The children are not always trained well enough to maintain a tidy environment and practise independence as part of their social development.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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

Views of parents and carers

The small number of returns means that each questionnaire response equates to about five per cent. The questionnaire compares unfavourably with the governors' July 2009 survey when there was a very positive response. Understandably the parents are unsettled about the leadership of the school and this is reflected in their responses. The governing body is actively pursuing a range of options to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Temporary arrangements have stabilised the school. Most parents agree that their children enjoy school and that the school provides well for their safety. There is no evidence to support the view that behaviour is not managed effectively, although there are instances where the work does not match pupils' needs accurately enough.

Inspection evidence does not support parental concerns about teaching itself, although recognises their concerns about changes in teachers. Teaching is satisfactory and results in pupils making satisfactory progress. The arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress are similar to those in most schools and the school has an 'open door' to discuss progress at other times if parents are concerned. It is true that homework has been inconsistent in recent months largely as a result of an unavoidable staff absence. The school has provided limited opportunities to enable parents to assist their children at home. Regular governor parent questionnaires enable parents to express their opinions and the current acting headteacher has met with groups of parents to receive their views. Some parents are concerned about communication but the acting headteacher has continued regular newsletters which keep parents informed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bulphan Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	38	11	52	2	10	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	43	11	52	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	14	10	48	6	29	2	10
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	14	14	67	2	10	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	4	19	12	57	3	14	2	10
The school helps me to support my child's learning	3	14	10	48	6	29	2	10
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	19	15	71	0	0	1	5
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)	2	10	10	48	1	5	1	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	10	14	67	4	19	1	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	10	9	43	2	10	5	24
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	10	10	48	4	19	2	10
The school is led and managed effectively	1	5	5	24	7	33	7	33
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	4	19	12	57	4	19	1	5

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



3 February 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Bulphan Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School,
Upminster, RM14 3RL

Thank you for your warm welcome, for sharing your work with me and for talking to me about the school. I was very interested in what you had to say. Your school provides a satisfactory education for you. I know that things at the school have been unsettling for you during the past few months but you have coped well with the changes. You make satisfactory progress in your work and reach a standard around that expected for your age. I enjoyed your singing in assembly. Most of you get on well together and you enjoy school. You have a good understanding of healthy life styles and you show this by joining in the extra activities. The staff look after you well and you enjoy happy relationships with them.

I have made three suggestions for the school to consider:

- helping you to make better progress in mathematics and ensuring that the staff give you work that helps you to take the next steps in your learning
- improving the opportunities for learning in the Reception class
- making better use of the records that staff keep of your progress to help you to improve your work.

You can help by making sure that you work as hard as you can, taking care with your work, taking pride in it and telling the teachers if your work is too easy or too difficult. Thank you once again for your help when I visited. I hope that you will do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sudworth

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.