

# Much Birch CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116833
<b>Local Authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	338902
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Farrell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Roisin Burge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Colin Howard
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Much Birch Hereford Herefordshire
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons and two assemblies, and six teachers, and held meetings with parents, governors, pupils and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including policies, school development planning and data on pupils' progress, and took account of 117 parent questionnaires.

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

- how well the school tracks pupils' progress and intervenes as necessary
- the effectiveness of pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being and the school's effectiveness in encouraging attendance
- the quality of the school's self-evaluation including that of teaching and assessment.

## Information about the school

Much Birch Church of England Primary School is a smaller-than-average sized, rural primary school educating pupils from the community between Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and no pupils are at an early stage of learning English. At the time of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were away from school on a residential trip and so inspectors consulted various other sources of evidence including progress data, pupils' work, and the school's records of teaching observations. Among its recent awards, the school has an Artsmark Gold Award.

**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

Much Birch is a good school. Christian values profoundly contribute to its warm, trusting ethos. The committed headteacher and senior staff ensure ambition to succeed is high and staff respond fully. All aspects of leadership and management are good including the strong challenge and support of experienced and capable governors and strong partnerships with parents, other schools and agencies such as the health services. Self-evaluation, including the school's observations of lessons, is well informed and leads to improvements. Tracking of pupils' progress is effective and enables the school to intervene in a timely way, for example to accelerate progress in pupils' writing. As a result, all aspects of provision are good. Consequently, pupils progress well and achieve well leaving school with attainments securely above levels typical for their age.

Teaching is enthusiastic and work is well pitched to pupils' different ability levels. Relationships between staff and children are caring and very positive. Assessment is carefully undertaken and informs the content and level of later lessons. Teaching assistants contribute well but teachers do not always deploy them fully, and, on occasions, teachers' questioning of pupils does not sufficiently probe pupils' understanding or extend their learning. The rich curriculum is especially strong in art and physical education and visits and visitors enrich provision. Good care, guidance and support contribute considerably to pupils' feelings of being valued. Transition arrangements, for example when pupils start or leave school, are effective.

In the Reception class children are given a good start and this continues in later key stages. Pupils enjoy school, behave well and show very positive attitudes. They feel safe because the systems for keeping them so are strong and given high priority. Preparation for the future is good because the school ensures good progress in literacy and numeracy and offers consistent opportunities for pupils to work together harmoniously. Good attendance is supported by effective procedures including celebrating high attendance. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. However, the school is aware that pupils' appreciation of the richness and diversity of cultures represented within the United Kingdom is limited. Effective self-evaluation, high staff morale, and passion to do even better give the school good capacity to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress from good to outstanding by:
  - ensuring effective deployment of teaching assistants
  - consistently using good questioning to probe pupils' understanding and extend

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learning.

- Develop pupils understanding of cultural diversity further by:
- Providing more opportunities for them to develop their awareness of the diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When pupils enter the Reception class their attainment, although varied, is generally slightly above the levels expected for their age. They make good progress in each key stage and leave school attaining standards securely above average. In 2009, pupils' progress in writing was lower than in previous years at Key Stage 2 but the school's timely interventions have accelerated progress to get it back on track. Pupils' work and the schools' analysis of its most recent data confirm pupils are making good progress. Different groups of pupils also make good progress, including boys and girls, pupils who are looked after by the local authority, those with different levels of ability and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Pupils with particular talents are encouraged well, including through tuition at a local High School and visiting sports coaches. Pupils understand their challenging targets and reach them, further contributing to their good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, but the school is rightly planning to liaise with similar schools to compare expectations of progress for these pupils to ensure these are more explicit.

Pupils enjoy school. They like being with their friends and find most lessons interesting. In a good lesson introducing a topic on Mexico, Year 2 pupils made good progress because the teacher's captivating opening enthused them and the wide range of resources including pottery, a flag, pictures of tapestry and a sombrero enriched learning. Behaviour was good and pupils grew in confidence as they answered the teachers' questions because of the ethos of trust and acceptance. In a good literacy lesson for Year 5, pupils progressed well because groups were well organised and their reading, grammar and written comprehension work, and spelling in different groups was well judged to challenge pupils. In the warm, encouraging ethos, pupils behaved well and tried their best. Relationships between pupils and adults are very positive and pupils feel valued and know adults have their best interests at heart. Consequently pupils' attitudes are very positive.

Pupils are safety conscious and are concerned for the welfare of others. Their behaviour is good. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating. They enjoy exercise and the take up of after school sports activities is good. Pupils respond well when given responsibility in the active school council, the Eco committee or as buddies for younger children. They are keen fundraisers for charities and contribute to village events. Pupils work and play together amicably, respect the feelings of others and have a highly developed sense of fair play.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding but a very large majority were good. Interesting and well-chosen resources and activities capturing pupils' interests contribute to high levels of enjoyment. Teachers know pupils very well and careful assessment clearly informs subsequent teaching: good planning ensures work is pitched well for pupils of different abilities. Within the lessons themselves, though teachers' questioning is generally effective, questions are not always demanding enough to fully probe pupils' understanding or stretch them. Teaching assistants make a strong and valued contribution especially with small groups of children and individuals. However, teachers do not always make the most of teaching assistants' skills when the teacher is introducing a lesson to the whole class.

In the good curriculum, information and communications technology is amply used. Literacy and numeracy are also well developed, including through cross-curricular links, but in numeracy opportunities to accelerate pupils' problem solving skills are sometimes missed. Pupils' progress in writing has been accelerated by the increased emphasis on this including 'big writing'. Outside coaches strongly contribute to the school's strengths in physical education. Strong links with schools in the local cluster and a good range of clubs enhance the curriculum. Good policies and clear, strong practice in care, guidance and support include secure links with other schools and agencies. Vigorous support for vulnerable pupils leads to striking examples of their progress and development. Parents

<sup>1</sup> 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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are very appreciative of the schools' provision in this area.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

### How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well and staff respond as a cohesive and well-motivated team. The good school development plan helps steer improvements. Systems of performance management and monitoring teaching are sharply focused on encouraging improvements. Clear policies for equal opportunities are coupled with a strong awareness of the importance of tackling any discrimination. In fact, there is no evidence of any negative discrimination, and pupils care greatly for each other. Safeguarding procedures are effective. They are a high priority and in good hands. Health and safety checks are very thorough and safeguarding training and procedures are regularly updated. The experienced governing body have a wealth of expertise, are extremely knowledgeable about the school and support and challenge it well. A strength is governors first hand monitoring from a well-planned and focused range of visits. The governing body is in the process of refining its own new systems for policy review. The school itself is highly cohesive and pupils share a secure knowledge of the local community. A very clear analysis of pupils' faith, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, and comparison to both local and wider communities, has enabled the school to identify where pupils' understanding might be enhanced. The school uses financial and other resources well to achieve good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve well because the teaching is lively and well matched to individual learning needs. They enjoy school and each other's company. Smiles and laughter are everywhere and children find learning is fun. Children quickly learn school routines, cooperate effectively with others and behave well. They are already developing an awareness of the importance of healthy eating and are safety conscious. Adults plan sessions effectively and provide well-judged support. Often they know just when to intervene and when to let children solve problems for themselves. Just occasionally adults miss opportunities to help children make the most of self-chosen tasks. A rich curriculum benefits learning. Communication, language and literacy are particularly well promoted. Children were fascinated to observe a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis and this promoted their language skills strongly as well as developing their awareness of the wonder of the world. There is a good balance between opportunities for pupils to learn through focused play and direct teaching. Recent improvements to the outside environment enable children to enjoy good opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Provision for the induction of children is good and links with parents are strong to the benefit of children's learning. The quality of care, guidance and support is a strength and is reflected in children's confidence and enjoyment of school. Good leadership and management strongly promote team work, and it is clear staff love their work.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

Some 117 parents and carers returned questionnaire, a very high response. Those who spoke to inspectors were very positive and felt well engaged by the school, and most of those returning questionnaires expressed positive views. There is strong agreement that children are safe, that teaching is good, and that children enjoy school. Among the many positive comments were that 'The school has a great open door policy that allows



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parents and carers access to all staff', and 'Much Birch is an exceptional school'. More negatively, a few parents and carers who responded state the school does not inform them about their children's progress and a few consider it does not deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents and carers and found no evidence to support the few negative perspectives.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Much Birch CofE 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 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 189 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	60	44	38	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	79	68	35	30	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	41	59	51	9	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	47	52	45	7	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	55	47	41	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	57	49	48	41	7	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	50	52	45	4	3	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)	55	47	53	46	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	47	55	47	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	45	52	45	8	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	41	60	52	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	52	49	42	5	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	60	43	37	3	3	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



11 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Much Birch CofE Primary School, Herefordshire, HR2 8HL

It was lovely to meet you when my colleagues and I inspected your school recently. Thank you for talking to us and for making us feel so welcome. You told us lots of things you enjoy and some of your favourite lessons. So what did we find?

Much Birch is a good school. It is well led and managed. The teaching, the curriculum and the way you are cared for and supported are all good. Because of this and because you behave so well, you make good progress in your work at school.

There are two things that could be even better so I have asked staff to:

Help you make better progress by making sure all adults in the classroom are working with you as much of the time as possible and that when you are asked questions staff always check what you have understood and extend your learning

Give you more opportunities to develop awareness of different cultures in the United Kingdom.

I am confident having seen how much you love school that you will take full advantage of these developments.

Thank you again for your warm welcome and I wish you the very best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell

Lead inspector

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