

St Barnabas CofE VA Primary Schol

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118724
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339283
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2010
Reporting inspector	John Paull

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Fr Edward Tomlinson
Headteacher	Teresa Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven lessons, taken by six different teachers. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, including school councillors, as well as meetings with staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Parents' and carers' views of the school were discussed with a small number of parents and carers in the morning before school. Parents' and carers' responses, as recorded in 48 questionnaires, were analysed and taken into account, as were views expressed in questionnaires completed by pupils and staff. Documents relating to safeguarding, the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, lesson planning and plans for the school's future development were also scrutinised.

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

- whether senior leaders are showing the necessary determination to ensure that improvements in teaching, learning, progress and attainment are sustainable, so differences in pupils' performances in different subjects are tackled successfully
- whether all the apparent strengths and strategies for improving outcomes in pupils' personal development and well-being are producing an impact on their attitudes, expectations and self-esteem
- whether provision and outcomes for children in the Reception class have improved since the last inspection.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than most other primary schools. It caters for the Early Years Foundation Stage in its Reception class. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion drawn from minority ethnic backgrounds has risen steadily since the last inspection and is now above average. Although several groups are represented, most of these pupils are from Eastern European backgrounds. The proportion of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language is also above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average; most of these pupils experience language, learning and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. More pupils than usual join or leave the school at times other than the beginning or end of the school year. The school holds a number of awards, including Healthy Schools and the bronze standard for its teaching of French.

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

This good school has improved strongly since its last inspection, moving on from a previously satisfactory performance. This has happened because the headteacher, together with the governors and staff, knows the school and its pupils very well, basing her views on carefully monitored performance. The information gained through the monitoring is then analysed and evaluated, sometimes rather modestly, but always effectively. As a result, correct decisions about what to do next are evident and the school's capacity to bring about improvement is good. The large majority of parents and carers and all staff agree. One parent/carer commented 'My child had only been here two weeks when I smiled as I walked past the headteacher. She immediately stopped and spoke to me about my child and her needs. After just two weeks, I didn't think she would even know her, but she knew her name and character and how to help. That's why children do well here.' A member of the support staff said 'The headteacher is a lovely person, whose example inspires everyone to do their best.' All of this means that morale is high and that, when something is identified as needing attention, there is drive, cooperation and determination to rectify it. This climate is the key to the school's improved performance.

Strong provision, including an interesting, rich curriculum and good care, guidance and support, contributes to pupils' good learning and progress. In regular meetings, senior leaders and teaching staff together review records that track pupils' progress. This review leads to good planning, which underpins good teaching. However, the headteacher has correctly identified that, between these meetings, some staff are less confident when interpreting the data themselves, making it difficult to delegate this monitoring further. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 6, many pupils have caught up to reach levels close to the average. Only a few, however, go beyond what is normally expected and to rectify this much good work is evident to help pupils improve their writing skills, to think confidently and creatively. Senior staff and subject leaders have rightly identified a need to extend similar, high-order thinking to the planning of mathematical investigations and scientific testing. Nevertheless, nearly all pupils in all groups achieve well from their starting points.

Most other outcomes are good. For example, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and pupils behave well. Pupils' attendance is the only exception to the pattern. This is well below average and holds back the skills that some pupils might otherwise gain for the future. Much good work with families is, however, improving this situation. Conversely, pupils' contributions to the day-to-day running of the school, seen in a variety of jobs and willingness to help staff, are very strong. Their wholehearted participation in civic and local events is often remarkable. Governors ensure that the

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vetting of staff and statutory requirements for risk assessment and child protection are fully met. Efforts to build community cohesion are evaluated well and ideas for future development are in place.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment, by:
 - increasing the numbers who reach higher levels than those normally expected
 - helping pupils to think more effectively for themselves, especially when planning investigations in mathematics and
- Raise the confidence of those staff who are less sure about the interpretation of data, as a first step to further delegation and sharing of responsibility for formal assessment and tracking pupils' progress.
- Raise the confidence of those staff who are less sure about the interpretation of data, as a first step to further delegation and sharing of responsibility for formal assessment and tracking pupils' progress.
- Work even more closely with those parents and carers whose children's attendance is poor, increasing their awareness of the link between a high rate of absence and low attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The school's national test results are affected considerably by the movement of pupils in and out of the school at other-than-normal times. Although several children enter the school with very low levels of skills, pupils' learning and progress are good. By the end of Year 2, attainment, although below average, is relatively stronger and achievement is good. By Year 6, it is evident in lessons that attainment is usually around average. Rapid progress was particularly apparent in an outstanding English lesson in Years 4 and 5. The use of pupils' own words, such as 'I could see the wind blowing in the tops of trees and the shadow of the gloomy wood', exemplified excellence in the use of atmospheric language and alliteration. This built confidence and self-esteem, so that the whole class concentrated fully on seeking flexible, extended sentences that flowed with atmosphere. In all lessons, teaching assistants were present in good numbers and were skilful in supporting the teaching staff and pupils. Teamwork of this kind, between assistants and teachers, was evident in a lesson on two-dimensional shapes in Years 2 and 3, producing good rates of progress. Pupils engaged well on a range of tasks that suited their different needs and that were led effectively by the four adults present. As a result, pupils succeeded in recognising how angles, lengths of sides and numbers of sides were important properties in identifying shapes and naming them. However, opportunities for pupils to investigate irregular or unusual shapes for themselves were not so evident. The pattern of good learning and progress resulting in average standards, despite low starting points, is apparent in other subjects. Samples of pupils' work in science demonstrate this, although test results indicate that few pupils reach higher than expected levels. Much good art work is on display and pupils sing well.

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Pupils are very quick to explain that they enjoy school a lot and that the staff have their best interests at heart. However, despite this, there are too many poor attenders, keeping absence rates high. Although much work on this is underway and the situation is improving, the effect of high absence is apparent in reducing some important skills needed for pupils' lives in the future. Nevertheless, pupils say that they feel safe, which is reflected in their parents' and carers' views. They also feel well consulted through their school council, which they perceive as having been the prime mover in getting electronic gates at the site entrance. They know much about keeping healthy. Pupils' care for and the help they give to each other, through 'buddying' in the playground and reading groups, lead to very strong contributions to the community. Their wholehearted involvement in Jon Oram's community drama, 'The Vanishing Elephant', is also having a lasting and remarkable impact on raising feelings of well-being in the locality. Pupils know much about other cultures and religions and there are good quality displays of their work that emphasise commonalities across groups and respect for differences.

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	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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Teaching is good. Senior and subject leaders, with the help of the local authority, monitor the quality effectively and ensure that improvement is continuous. Senior staff, through meetings and at other times, ensure that formal assessment is used effectively to adapt planning. Teachers' regular assessment, through the questioning of pupils and marking, is used to set and adapt targets and to inform the pupils about the next steps to take. Nearly all teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. No teaching seen during the inspection was less than satisfactory. Planning is good, based on a good curriculum that often combines subjects across thematic topics. These topics include increasing opportunities for pupils to explore their own creative ideas, although similar opportunities for independent working are not so apparent in mathematics and science lessons. These features contribute to teachers' good knowledge of what to teach and when, so that the pace of learning is appropriate to pupils' needs.

Teachers and teaching assistants alike use resources well and their good knowledge of the pupils in their classes results in pupils' differing requirements being met effectively. For example, pupils at early stages of learning English are well catered for and so they settle quickly and acquire English successfully. Those who join the school early enough to benefit from this good provision often make rapid progress and are well represented among pupils who reach average attainment. The staff's willingness to seek partnerships and advice from agencies and to act on the results contributes strongly to the removal of barriers to pupils' learning. The presence of a highly effective family liaison officer, about whose work on their behalf several parents and carers commented positively, is an important contribution in this area. Such liaison work has also been effective in raising attendance rates for some previously poor attenders. The headteacher also facilitates processes of this kind very well, setting up meetings with experts and a range of advisers at the school, rather than off site, so that parents and carers are able to attend more easily. This is also an important reason why pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with emotional or behavioural difficulties thrive and make similar progress to other pupils.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's approachability and the staff's willingness to respond with hard work and enthusiasm are important factors in explaining how teaching, learning and progress have been improved. The governors recognise this fully and are both supportive and

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questioning in their approach. They, too, have been instrumental in meeting local pupils' needs. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body, who is also the parish priest, has been a key person in ensuring that a local playgroup has been set up at the church, filling a need for nursery-aged children to experience Early Years Foundation Stage provision before they join the Reception class. Ambition for pupils and the raising of expectations are pushed on well in such highly practical and effective ways. Governors have a good committee structure, reorganised recently to ensure the growing expertise of individuals. For example, one of them has taken responsibility for safeguarding issues, knows the school's arrangements well and has a system to review policy and practice methodically in conjunction with the school's senior leadership. As a result, management of procedures related to safeguarding is good. The promotion of equal opportunities and community cohesion are being approached in a similarly effective manner. The school's involvement in building bridges within the locality is already very strong and the impact for pupils has been powerful. However, an audit carried out by the school demonstrates that more work is required on the global context to raise the school's influence on community cohesion to become outstanding. Nevertheless, the school has a bronze award for French teaching and, as part of its ambition to raise this to silver, has established a partnership with a school in France. Many examples of similarly systematic and business-like management are evident, ensuring good value for money. Above all, humanity and openness shine through the school's performance.

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	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

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

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Until the recent opening of a local playgroup at the parish church, few entrants to the Early Years Foundation Stage had any experience of nursery provision. Indications are that, although attainment on entry often remains lower than usual, it is now higher than when many pupils in the older classes first started school. Much emphasis is placed on helping children to settle quickly when they arrive. Success is evident, based on good initial contact with families. The family liaison officer often supports this contact. Children grow in confidence and become very willing to show adults the results of their play and activities. Independence and self-reliance are encouraged well and children register themselves using a card system. They learn and progress well, giving every appearance of enjoying what they do. There is a wide range of needs amongst the children, but all the staff are skilful in engaging the children's interest and ensuring good learning in all areas of learning, based on a well-constructed curriculum. Planning indicates that opportunities are well balanced between activities led by adults and those initiated by the children. This was observed to be the case during sessions that were indicative of good teaching and provision.

Records of children's responses to activities are thorough, with each adult taking responsibility for a group. The collated information is used effectively to plan good progress for children of all abilities and needs. Behaviour is good. Children make marks and patterns on paper using a variety of pencils, crayons and small tools. Emerging writing skills, letter sounds and mathematics are encouraged and provided for effectively. Currently, more children than at any time in the past are on course to exceed age-related goals when they enter Year 1, although many others remain below. However, bearing in mind their starting points, this represents good achievement for all. It is happening because leadership and management of the provision are good. Statutory requirements are met, including those for the presence of staff with paediatric first-aid training.

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

In questionnaires and in discussions, the large majority of parents and carers expressed satisfaction with what the school offers their children. Many were highly complimentary about the openness of the headteacher and staff and their willingness to help and offer advice whenever approached. However, a small number of parents and carers did not agree, feeling that their views are not listened to and that they do not receive enough

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information about their children's progress. The inspection team saw much evidence to agree with those parents and carers whose views are positive, finding that the school's ethos is open and consultative about children's progress and that senior staff and classroom staff are welcoming and take different views into account.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Aided 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 119 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	50	20	42	1	2	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	46	22	56	4	8	2	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	12	25	27	56	4	8	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	29	26	54	5	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	14	29	28	58	2	4	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	31	26	54	1	2	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	40	25	52	2	4	2	4
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)	12	25	25	54	2	4	2	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	23	30	63	3	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	29	27	56	3	6	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	25	28	58	5	10	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	21	44	22	46	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	48	23	48	1	2	1	2

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 St Barnabas Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 2EY

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. You helped enormously to make the two days go smoothly. We enjoyed speaking to you and visiting your lessons. It is great that so many of you told us that you enjoy school a lot. We also enjoyed speaking to you, especially the school councillors and those of you whom we met in the dining room and playground. All of them thought that yours is a good school. We agree with them.

Here are some important things that we found out about your school

- Your teachers teach and care for you well
- Your learning and progress are good.
- You behave well.
- You know a lot about how to stay safe and eat healthily.
- Your willingness to do jobs that help your teachers and to cooperate with each other is excellent, as was your contribution to The Vanishing
- Your achievement is good, although we have asked the staff and governors to include more opportunities for you to develop your own thinking about experiments in science and investigations in maths.
- We have also asked them to do even more than they are now to impress on some of your parents and carers how important it is that you attend school whenever possible, as attendance is low compared with other schools
- We would like all the staff to know as much as the headteacher and senior staff do, especially about how to use all the good information that they store about your work.
- Your headteacher, other staff and governors have lots of really good ideas to improve your school even more.

We both wish you the very best for your future and hope that you will always enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

John W Paull

Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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