

Beckington Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123742
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	340414
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miriam Cheal
Headteacher	Claire Chantler
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors spent almost half the time observing teaching and learning, seeing all four teachers, eight lessons and making an additional four visits to classes, so each class was visited three times. They held meetings with governors, staff and pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation including data showing how well each pupil makes progress as well as policies and documents about safeguarding the pupils. Additionally, they analysed questionnaires returned by 39 parents and six members of staff.

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

- the levels of challenge for higher attaining pupils in writing throughout the school
- the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2
- the impact of recent developments in Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

Information about the school

This is a small rural school where pupils are taught in four mixed'age classes. The headteacher teaches for 40% of the week. Although pupils' backgrounds vary most come from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average but includes pupils with emotional, social and learning difficulties. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. There are more boys than girls in school and this is very pronounced in some year groups. An after-school club for pupils aged four to nine is provided on the school site. This is not managed by the school governors and did not form part of this inspection.

The inspection follows a period of significant staff change; additionally, more than half the governors are new to their roles. The headteacher has been in post for 18 months and during this period the school has achieved environmental awards and Activemark in recognition of its physical education.

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 is a well led, good school. Some elements of its work are outstanding. For example, the school provides excellent care, especially for those pupils facing particular challenges. One parent described her child's support as 'amazing'. At the time of the inspection safeguarding arrangements were good. These strengths contribute to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and there are examples of individual pupils who demonstrate considerable maturity, for example in their concern for the environment. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by international contacts, but plans to link with a school in a contrasting United Kingdom area have only just begun. Learning is increasingly planned through themes that link subjects and add interest for pupils. However, planning for topics about different cultures and communities is very recent.

With an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, the headteacher has strategically steered the school through a period of considerable change, in spite of her significant teaching commitment. She has clarified subject leaders' responsibilities and so increased their accountability. Most significantly, the school has developed a clear system for checking each pupil's progress as they move through the school and staff now hold regular meetings to ensure that pupils' needs are met. The school recognises that because this is new, governors and teachers are still developing the skills to interpret this information.

Books have been up-dated, resources improved and outside learning areas developed, in order to underpin the school's vision for a more stimulating curriculum. The curriculum has been extended, and pupils have more opportunities to apply key skills in different subjects. Pupils enjoy the developing topic work, which contributes to their exceptionally strong understanding of healthy lifestyles. Good teaching has developed with an increased focus on encouraging pupils to learn independently. Good teamwork has ensured a shared approach to these successful initiatives in a short space of time. The extent of these improvements demonstrates the school's good capacity for further development.

Most pupils join the school with the level of skills, knowledge and understanding expected for their age. Good teaching and suitable activities help them to make good progress during the Reception year. Good learning continues and pupils leave Year 4 with attainment that exceeds expectations for their age. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as their classmates due to the good support provided for them. The school has correctly identified that over recent years, progress has been less consistent for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Opportunities for pupils currently in Year 4 to assess their own learning against clear expectations are

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inconsistent. It is too soon for the full impact of recent school developments in this area to have consistently accelerated their learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate learning for pupils in Years 3 and 4 by specifying clear expectations consistently in lessons and involving pupils more often in assessing their own learning.
- Keep a closer check on pupils' progress and achievement by developing governors' and teachers' skills in interpreting data.
- Develop pupils' understanding of diversity by developing the use of relevant topic work and forging links with another United Kingdom school before the end of this academic year.

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

Learning for boys and girls is equally good because teachers and teaching assistants know pupils very well and plan effectively for active learning and differing needs. The inspection focused on higher attaining pupils' progress in writing because the school had identified this as a recent area for development. Lesson observations indicate that higher attaining pupils make similar progress to their peers. For example, in Year 2 pupils of different abilities made good progress in structuring a non-chronological report, because of well-pitched expectations and skilful questioning. Higher attaining pupils applied their scientific knowledge and constructed increasingly complex sentences about 'ducks' habitats'.

The inspection also focused on how well pupils in Years 3 and 4 achieve because school records indicate that these pupils made slower progress than younger pupils in the recent past. Inspection evidence confirmed this although their progress is now improving. During the inspection pupils of all abilities in Years 3 and 4 made good progress in their understanding of capacity, measurement and estimating because the work was finely tuned to meet their varying needs. However, in a literacy lesson they made satisfactory gains in writing creatively because the subject of, 'The Door' interested them and they used thesauruses to extend their vocabulary. In this lesson, opportunities to accelerate learning for all groups, by giving them opportunities to judge themselves against specific success criteria were missed.

Although pupils behave well in lessons, periodically they need help to remain focused. This is especially noticeable with older pupils when they are working independently. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in good attendance rates. They have a good understanding of day-to-day safety issues and older pupils are impressive in their encouragement of younger pupils to participate in healthy exercise. Their spiritual development, as demonstrated in valuing the natural world and qualities such as 'friendship', is good. Although their understanding of different British societies is limited, they are keen to learn more about the wider world and were very excited at competing with Australian children during 'World Mathematics Day'. They are becoming kind and

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considerate young people, well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know pupils very well and usually plan to meet the differing needs within their classes effectively. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning because they provide discreet support for small groups, usually, but not exclusively, for pupils who find learning difficult. Learning is sometimes satisfactory rather than good when part of the lesson either slows or is too rushed and opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning are missed.

Teaching strategies and curriculum topics successfully combine to ensure that boys and girls are equally interested. For example, pupils regularly learn through practical activities often using the outside areas. During the inspection, pupils in Years 2 and 3 benefited from a science lesson that began outside observing and discussing the best locations for plants to grow.

A key strength lies in the use of computer technology to support pupils' learning in other subjects. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 used good levels of skill to select and

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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alter text and graphics to produce newspaper articles about Victorians. Staff and pupils are enthusiastic about weekly sessions when teachers teach a specialist subject to all groups of pupils in turn. This extends pupils' experience by, for example, enabling French to be taught from the Reception to Year 4 and specialist music teaching so pupils can participate in cultural events with other local schools.

The school is extremely caring. Flexible curriculum arrangements, as well as individual provision such as a warm breakfast when necessary, improve the most vulnerable pupils' readiness to learn and benefit from the school's provision. The school works well with other professionals and is especially proactive in involving other professional agencies to promote pupils' welfare.

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?

Most parents and all staff who returned questionnaires believe that the school is well led and managed. One parent describes the headteacher's success in having rapidly promoted such a teamwork approach to school improvement as, 'a breath of fresh air'. Staff share a determination to promote equality of opportunity for all and are particularly successful in helping the most vulnerable pupils to participate fully in school life. They are developing their effectiveness in reducing discrepancies in the achievements of different groups of pupils.

The development plan is key to the proven track record of school improvement. Clear and detailed plans provide a firm basis for continued development and give staff and governors a shared understanding of school priorities, their rationale and how the school will measure success. These strengths combine to ensure that the school is well placed for continued development. Governors have made a good start to developing their understanding of the school. They are visible around school and are monitoring the effectiveness of lessons with increasing thoroughness. They have recently gained a clearer understanding of the challenges facing the school in extending community cohesion. They are now ready to support the school in its plans to develop links with a school in London and develop the curriculum to underpin this aspect of the school's work. However, much of this improvement in governance is in its early stages and has not yet been fully effective in supporting and challenging managers and leaders.

Subject leaders are empowered. They are embracing their increased responsibility and enthusiastically identifying their contribution to driving whole-school developments.

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Although there is more to be done in increasing teachers' and governors' skills in interpreting data, they are now involved in realistic and challenging target-setting for individual pupils. This is promoting above average attainment and good achievement. Good arrangements for keeping pupils safe take full account of parents' views which have contributed to the school site being very secure. Safeguarding systems and procedures are underpinned by particularly thorough records related to vetting and staff are very aware of child protection issues. The school is in the process of developing its promotion of community cohesion and is constructing some policies and procedures to improve this aspect further.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured that staff share a commitment to helping all children make good progress. They do this most consistently in promoting children's early social, literacy and numeracy skills. This is because when adults lead activities with these emphases they make good use of interesting resources and capture children's imaginations to help them learn effectively. For example, during the inspection children had fun hiding sheep pictures inside, under or behind little tins while they learned positional vocabulary.

Recent developments reflect national guidance and ensure that children regularly have a chance to pursue ideas independently. During the inspection a small group of boys applied their understanding of space, weight and size well, while manipulating play farm equipment. They also shared their knowledge and understanding of working farms to

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develop a story. Similarly, children made good gains in several areas of learning while instructing each other in the use of a computer keyboard and mouse to 'paint' a picture. On occasions, children receive a little too much adult help, and this constrains their learning and their choices. For example, when children added designs to paper 'buckets', adults had prepared the materials. Consequently, while experimenting with colour, opportunities to apply physical and mathematical skills creatively were reduced.

The school's established ethos of nurturing each individual child contributes to children's well-being in the Reception Year. Children happily work alongside their older classmates. They show a willingness to keep themselves and others safe by behaving well and increasingly taking turns to use resources. Their willingness to learn and their curiosity are demonstrated when they approach staff and ask, 'Can I play?'

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

Most parents appreciate the work of the school although a few have concerns. These are mostly related to issues of communication, such as not feeling listened to or not receiving sufficient information about their child's progress. These views are not held by the majority of parents who returned questionnaires. The inspection found that routes of communication had improved recently and are now good. Parents were unanimous in their appreciation of the school's work to keep their child safe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Beckington Church of England First 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 39 questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 87 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	67	12	31	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	72	11	28	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	36	22	56	2	5	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	59	11	28	2	5	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	26	67	11	28	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	51	14	36	4	10	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	67	12	31	1	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)	13	33	18	46	2	5	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	44	17	44	4	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	44	18	46	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	36	20	51	3	8	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	12	31	21	54	4	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	59	13	33	2	5	1	3

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.



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5 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Beckington Church of England First School, Frome, BA11 6TG

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently. I should like to say an extra 'thank you' to the children who met with me in the hall and the information and communication technology suite. I enjoyed hearing your ideas about school and seeing your work very much.

We agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school. We were particularly pleased to see how well everyone learns in lessons. This means that when you leave at the end of Year 4 you are doing better in English and mathematics than most children of your age. The school keeps a close check on how well you are all doing. They can see, and we agree with them, that when you are in Years 3 and 4 your progress is not always as good as it could be. We have asked your teachers to make sure you always know precisely what you are aiming for and give you more chances to check your progress. You can help by continuing to work hard and concentrate well even when you are working without an adult. The headteacher, governors and teachers are working closely together to keep making your school even better. We have asked them to make sure that they all really understand all the information about how well you are doing so they can come up with more ideas to improve the school further.

We could see how much you enjoy school by seeing how well you behave in lessons, and how well you attend. We know how much some of you enjoyed competing with children in Australia in your 'Mathletics' on World Maths Day, but you do not have many chances to learn about people in the United Kingdom who come from different backgrounds. We have asked the headteacher and teachers to continue with their plans to make contact with schools in London, as well as choosing topics that will help. We should like them to do this before your summer holidays.

Your understanding about how to be healthy and your willingness to put this into practice is impressive. The work that older children do with younger ones to help them exercise at break-times is fantastic. We know that you and your parents appreciate that

the adults in your school are tremendously caring.

Yours sincerely

Jill Bavin

Lead Inspector

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