

Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122271
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	359206
Inspection dates	20–21 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Joyce Guthrie
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Hush
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed; five teachers and five teaching assistants were seen. Meetings were held with staff, governors and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment and tracking data showing pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, teachers' lesson plans and minutes of governing body meetings. They took account of the views of parents and carers, as expressed in 42 questionnaires that were returned. They also took account of the views of staff and pupils in questionnaires that they returned.

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

- How well all groups of pupils make progress from their different starting points.
- Whether the school's development of assessment procedures have improved teaching and learning and pupils' attainment.
- Whether improvements to leadership and management, and partnership with parents have impacted on the effectiveness of the school.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. Nearly all pupils are from White British heritage. The school serves a local Traveller community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is close to average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, so too is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has a higher-than-average number of pupils joining and leaving the school each year other than at the normal time of entry. There has been a decline in pupil numbers in recent years. The school holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools status and Activemark.

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 good school where pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development. Some aspects of its work are outstanding because the headteacher has given an excellent lead to improving the school since the previous inspection. She has been very well supported by all staff and members of the governing body..

Responsibility for improving the school is well distributed amongst all staff, who readily accept accountability for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. The result is that school evaluation is accurate and staff know exactly what needs to be done to improve the school further, so that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Attainment is above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4, with nearly all pupils reaching the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, and a good proportion regularly exceeding it. Teaching and learning are good because teachers have a good grasp of what pupils know and what they need to learn next. They use a variety of methods to interest and engage pupils in their learning and give them plenty of opportunity to learn independently. This is not always the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children do not have enough variety in their activities to fully develop their independent learning or to follow their own interests and curiosity. A well-planned curriculum is enhanced through excellent links with other schools and organisations, so that pupils have numerous opportunities to extend their interests and develop their talents. Excellent care, guidance and support ensure pupils are safe and happy in school and are able to learn in a secure and lively environment. Pupils develop good personal skills. Their behaviour and healthy lifestyles are both excellent. They seize every opportunity to keep fit and are eager to explain why eating fruit and drinking water are better than sweets and fizzy drinks! Pupils of all ages make an outstanding contribution to their own and wider communities through school to school contacts, fund-raising, inter-church activities and entertaining local residents. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is continually finding new ways of extending pupils' contact with the wider world to develop their understanding of diversity and tolerance because the school's development of community cohesion is excellent..

Governance is good, because members of the governing body are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. They effectively challenge and support the school and carefully monitor the budget. The school has developed excellent partnership with parents and carers through consultations and workshops since the previous inspection, so they are now able to play a fuller part in supporting their children's learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
- Increasing the variety of play activities available for independent learning.
- Developing more links between the Nursery and Reception classes so all children benefit from all resources, including staff expertise.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. Above average standards of attainment at the end of Year 2 have been maintained since the previous inspection, though more stringent teacher assessment has reduced the proportion of pupils who gain a Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 4, nearly all pupils reach the standards expected for their age, and every year a good proportion exceeds this. The school's prompt response to slightly weaker performance in reading has resulted in more pupils reaching the expected level for their age this year.

Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy learning. When asked what they like best about lessons, they are quick to reply, 'Everything, every single thing!' They work hard and listen extremely well to teachers' explanations. They start on tasks quickly, eager to show teachers how well they can do. Their excellent behaviour ensures not a moment is wasted in lessons, while their good team skills ensure they support each other well, sharing their learning so that the pace is always brisk. Pupils have an excellent understanding of a healthy lifestyle: they eat healthy snacks and take plenty of vigorous exercise, in the playground and in after school clubs. Pupils of all ages relish responsibilities; older ones willingly train as playground leaders and make an enormous difference to the community in and out of school through their excellent contribution. By the time they leave, pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and moral development prepares them well for the future, with good basic skills and excellent personal qualities.

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

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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The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Good lesson planning is based on teachers' accurate assessment of pupils' learning. This ensures that they provide work at the right level to challenge and motivate pupils, while bringing them success and raising their confidence. Teachers make good use of technology and interesting resources to accelerate learning. Lessons buzz with activity and excitement as pupils work hard to meet the challenges and please their teachers. Good questioning by teachers stretches pupils' thinking so that they work out ideas for themselves; it also gives teachers a good insight into how well pupils are learning and where there are misunderstandings. Excellent relationships and high expectations from teachers create a harmonious, well-focused atmosphere in lessons which helps pupils to thrive. Teaching assistants are well trained and briefed well for their role in support pupils of all abilities. They monitor the progress of pupils and ensure that they make similar progress to others in the class.

The curriculum is well planned and structured to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There is a good focus on developing basic skills, including information and communication technology, so that pupils are well prepared for the future. Personal, social and health education programmes and visiting experts give pupils a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. The school provides excellent enrichment opportunities for pupils through numerous specialist staff who bring new skills to fire pupils' enthusiasm for learning in different ways. Pupils of all ages especially enjoyed the rhythm and movement session where they worked extremely hard to keep up with the coach. The creative curriculum has developed well, with whole-school themed weeks giving rise to some high quality work from children and pupils of all ages. Older pupils spoke with great enthusiasm of their re-enactment of the Battle of Hallidon, and displays of work around the theme of Berwick show how much pride pupils take in recording their learning. The school provides a vast range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by pupils and help them develop new interests and talents.

Staff know pupils and their families exceptionally well. Both groups agree that the school keeps them safe and secure and takes very good care of them. Staff show a very strong

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commitment to supporting and guiding pupils, who have very high levels of trust in teachers to solve any problems they may have. Teachers are quick to identify pupils who need additional support and the school has good links with external services to provide this expert help. Teaching assistants are well trained to supplement this support so that pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable receive the continuity they need to overcome difficulties. Transition into the middle school has been strengthened. The excellent links made by the headteacher to share resources, including staff expertise, with all schools in the area have given school staff and parents a better knowledge of the school the pupils transfer into.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has given excellent direction to developing the school since the previous inspection. Under her leadership the roles of all staff have been extended, so they are able to play a full part in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and in taking action to improve it. School evaluation is accurate and effective in identifying the most important areas for improvement. The resulting high staff morale is accelerating improvement as staff see their successes in improved attainment and better use of assessment to support pupil progress. The headteacher's clear ambition for the school is very well supported by all involved.

Members of the governing body give good support to the school and are strongly involved in monitoring its work and guiding improvement. They ensure that good safeguarding practices are adopted and that equality of opportunity is well promoted so that all pupils have equal access to all the school has to offer. Since the previous inspection the school has developed strong links and partnerships with external providers, local schools and colleges and with parents. Parents and carers have been drawn into close partnership with the school and are encouraged through workshops and open days to support their children's learning. Community cohesion is a strength of the school with numerous links locally, nationally and internationally to give pupils a good perspective on the diversity of society and their role in supporting and strengthening communities.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good procedures help children settle in quickly when they join the Nursery. They gain confidence quickly because they are well cared for and feel safe and secure. Transition to the Reception class is well managed so that older children also settle quickly to new routines. Children achieve well, from below the expected starting points and they make good gains in their personal and social skills. By the end of Reception the majority reach the goals expected and each year some children exceed them. Children learn to share and enjoy working together, for example, in the doctor's surgery or when constructing waterfalls. During inspection, too few such opportunities for child led, collaborative learning were evident. Not enough use is made of all resources, indoors and out, to ensure that children are tempted to explore and follow their natural curiosity. Staff are aware of this and the school has begun to extend the use of facilities for the benefit of all children. Direct teaching is good, because staff have a good knowledge of the children and know how to present new ideas and develop their skills. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to interact with children informally and engage them in talk to develop their communication skills. Links with parents are very good, especially in encouraging them to support their children's learning. The development of 'learning journeys', which record each child's progress, are welcomed by parents and carers who value these insights into their children's learning. Leadership and management are good, responsibilities are delegated well and the school is clear about where improvements are needed.

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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

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are unanimous in agreeing that their children are safe and cared for well. Many parents and carers expressed their appreciation of how well their children are supported to overcome any difficulties. 'St Mary's has been fantastic for my son's needs. I don't know what I would have done without the help and support from teachers.' The inspection team acknowledges that pupils are very well cared for and supported. It judged this as one of the outstanding aspects of the school's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Berwick St Mary's 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 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 115 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	69	11	26	2	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	71	12	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	38	25	60	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	52	18	43	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	25	60	15	36	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	50	20	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	60	16	38	1	2	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)	21	50	18	43	3	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	52	19	45	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	43	22	52	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	38	26	62	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	40	24	57	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	67	14	33	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



22 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Berwick St Mary's Church of England First School, Berwick-upon-Tweed, TD15 1SP

Thank you for being so kind and friendly when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed hearing your views and watching you work and play. We think that yours is a good school and that some of its work is outstanding. Here are the things that make it so good. Your behaviour is excellent, you are very fit and healthy, you care for each other extremely well and help the school community run very smoothly. You make good progress in your learning because you work hard, are well taught and have an interesting curriculum with lots of exciting extra activities which fire your enthusiasm. Children in Year 1 came up with some excellent ideas of what makes your school a good place to learn such as, 'kind people', 'teachers who are happy', 'going on adventures' and 'the children are happy and excited'. We agree with them that these things are all helping you to do well in your learning and making you feel safe and happy in school.

Your teachers take excellent care of you and they have excellent links with your parents and carers so they know when you need a little extra help or support. You told us that your teachers are always there to help and that you know they will solve any problems that you have. This is very important in helping you settle in lessons and learn well and is another of the outstanding things about your school. Finally, your school is well led and managed by the headteacher, governors and the staff, who all want the best for you. To help your school become even better, we have asked the governors and staff to improve the learning of children in the Nursery and Reception classes, by giving them more time to learn for themselves with more activities to learn from. We know that you will help your teachers and governors make your school even better by working as hard and being as happy as you were during our visit.

Please accept our very best wishes for a successful and happy year.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector

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