

St Bartholomew's Church of England First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123750
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359506
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Hazel Callaghan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Antony Samuel
Headteacher	Gillian Harcombe
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2007
School address	Kithill Crewkerne TA18 8AS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were observed taught by seven teachers as well as various short observations of pupils at work in their lessons. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at various policies and documents related to the safeguarding of pupils, and scrutinised 65 parental questionnaires and those returned by staff and pupils.

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

- The quality of teaching and learning and the extent to which it meets the needs of all pupils, especially of boys in reading and writing and the more able pupils throughout the school.
- The extent to which teachers are confident in their use of assessment to identify pupils' next steps and how they use the information to ensure activities meet the needs of all abilities, especially the more able.
- The extent to which the new leadership team has already started to have an impact on improvement and how well the governing body are able to support the process.

Information about the school

Pupils at St Bartholomew's are almost all from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally and the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average. There have been significant changes in staff over the last year, with two acting headteachers supporting the school until the new substantive head took up post in September of this year. The deputy headteacher also took up post in September along with three other teachers. The pupils and staff had been back at school for eight days when the inspection took place. The staff and governors of St Bartholomew's are working with two other schools with the intention of forming a federation in the near future.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Bartholomew's First School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school has gone through a period of significant change. This has led to uncertainty for staff, parents and carers. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have only recently taken up post but already there is an atmosphere of 'new beginnings'. The governing body say that morale through the school is on the rise as a new sense of purpose is made clear. New teachers also say that they have been supported very well by the leadership team and established staff, so already feel part of a strong team. One new member of staff reported that, 'The enthusiasm of both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher for improved teaching and learning within the school is infectious.'

Improvements in the leadership and management of teaching assistants last year have already been consolidated and their roles further developed, with the result that they are more involved in planning of activities and leading teaching groups. They too say they feel an important part of the school team. The role of teaching assistants can be seen particularly well-promoted in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children have settled very quickly and are already working purposefully. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have correctly identified the areas for further improvement and many positive initiatives and new ways of working have been introduced. It is still very early in the term to see the full impact of these strategies and for standards to rise and so, although a good start has been made, capacity for further improvement is judged as satisfactory.

Pupils' attainment through the school is broadly average, with particular strengths in writing. Pupils through the school make satisfactory progress. They are keen to do well and behave well in lessons, concentrating effectively. Activities, however, are not always as interesting as they could be and do not sufficiently build on what pupils already know and can do. Activities are sometimes inconsistently matched to pupils' different abilities with the result that more-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and are not reaching the standards of which they are capable in all reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum, although covering all of the aspects required, is not particularly stimulating and exciting and does not sufficiently meet all pupils' needs.

Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar satisfactory progress to their peers. One or two have made good progress, especially in overcoming barriers to learning because all staff show good levels of care, support and guidance for them and their families. Pupils say they feel are well cared for and safe. The positive ethos that underpins the school's work is evident in pupils' good levels of spiritual and moral development and in their care for one another. This was seen clearly demonstrated by the immediate response of a boy in a Year 3/4 class to comfort a girl in

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his class who was upset. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and enjoy working together. There are many planned opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest and to work with a variety of other pupils and adults, but at present opportunities to extend their awareness of the diversity of other cultures is satisfactory.

The new headteacher, with the deputy headteacher, has made a very positive start in moving the school forward. There is a clear focus on improving teaching through sharing good practice, through training and in consolidating the assessment strategies introduced last year. Many changes have occurred in the composition of the governing body but they are fully involved in strategic planning for the future federation with two local schools. They are very supportive of the new leadership team and the staff generally, but many have not had the training that would support their role and responsibilities in terms of monitoring the work of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement, including pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics, by increasing the proportion of good teaching by:
 - ensuring activities are well matched to pupils' needs so that all, and especially the most able, make good progress in their learning
 - accurately using information from assessment so that activities build on what pupils have already learnt and can do
 - ensuring that little time is wasted in lessons and that activities move along briskly.
- Develop the curriculum so that it stimulates pupils' enjoyment of learning and is relevant to their needs by:
 - developing meaningful links between subjects, particularly with information and communication technology (ICT), so that learning is purposeful and pupils' independent learning skills are enhanced
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of the diversity of other cultures
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to be independent learners.
- Enable the governing body to play their part in moving the school forward by taking a more active part in monitoring its work and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most parents and carers say that their children enjoy school and this was confirmed by the pupils themselves. Their attitudes to work are good and they support and encourage one another. In lessons they settle to work with a good will and even when activities become repetitive or lacking in interest and challenge they continue to behave well. Pupils enjoy working together in pairs and groups and when given the opportunity they share ideas with enthusiasm. This was exemplified well in a literacy lesson in a Year 3

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and 4 class where pupils worked in groups to find interesting phrases and vocabulary to develop story ideas. These positive attitudes ensure that pupils make good progress when the teaching is effective but generally their progress and overall achievement is satisfactory.

Evidence from the school's monitoring of pupils' attainment over the last few years show that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is broadly average, as it has been over the last few years but with particular strengths in pupils' writing, which is above average. In Year 4, pupils' attainment is in line with the standards expected for their age, but pupils told inspectors that they found their tasks easy and lacking in challenge. This is confirmed by the fact that few pupils reach above- average standards in both Years 2 and 4 in end-of-year tests. Opportunities for developing pupils' learning skills, especially independence, are improving but this is still not a strong aspect of pupils' learning.

Girls and boys achieve similarly overall but this can vary slightly from year to year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged effectively but their individual targets for improvement are sometimes too broad to enable teachers and teaching assistants to plan for their good progress, so most make satisfactory progress like their peers. Those with personal difficulties that create barriers to their learning are, however, well supported and these often make good progress because of the good levels of pastoral care and guidance.

Pupils are polite and curious and have a good understanding of how to keep safe and to develop a healthy lifestyle. They very much enjoy the 'Wake and Shake' sessions each morning. Pupils' social skills are developed well and they understand what is fair and unfair, right and wrong and are keen to take responsibility. Pupils are proud of the school's work in supporting the environment through their 'eco awareness' activities and in supporting worldwide charities. Although pupils are said to enjoy school, attendance has fallen over the last year from above average to being broadly average and the number of persistent absentees has grown.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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	
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Throughout the many changes and uncertainties over the last year, relationships between the staff and the pupils have remained strong and overall good levels of care, support and guidance have been maintained. There are many examples of how staff have gone out of their way to provide good levels of pastoral care that have helped pupils overcome their personal difficulties. Good relationships are one of the strengths of teaching. Pupils are confident that teachers will help them when they are unsure of their tasks, and know they can go to any member of staff if they have concerns. Expectations of pupils' good behaviour are high but expectations for the amount of progress pupils make are not as successful, especially for the more able. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure and explanations are effective. This was clearly seen in mathematics lesson in Year 2 where the teacher took particular pains to explain new work and to provide a fun activity to help pupils understand the concept of rounding up to the nearest ten. The pace of lessons, however, is occasionally a little slow and activities too frequently are lacking in interest or challenge. Agreed school procedures for helping pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve have been consistently introduced, but are not yet fully embedded. Some meaningful links are made between subjects to enhance pupils' learning and there has been a strong focus on developing pupils' ideas through discussion and drama that have resulted in their good attainment in writing. Less focus has been given to the development of ICT and in its use to support pupils' learning in other subjects. Much of the equipment is becoming dated and a few staff lack either the confidence or expertise to ensure pupils' ICT skills are promoted well. Effective links with other local schools and agencies are used well in supporting both staff development and pupils' personal and academic progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher did not inherit a school development plan, but in the short time she has been connected with the school she has accurately identified the areas of priority for improvement. The further development of teaching and learning is highest on the list and two days in-service training completed before the term started can already be seen to be having a positive and consistent impact on teachers' practice.

The school has a satisfactory range of procedures and policies to promote the safeguarding of pupils. The headteacher and members of the governing body have completed the training for safe recruitment and the school site provides a safe and secure environment for learning. The governing body ensure that health and safety assessments are carried out appropriately.

The school is an inclusive community, welcoming pupils from a variety of backgrounds. It provides satisfactory provision for all pupils to achieve and is effective in preventing any form of discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. However, leaders recognise that opportunities for the most-able pupils to do better are sometimes lacking. Leaders have successfully evaluated provision for promoting community cohesion. The headteacher has correctly identified that while the school builds strong relationships with the local community and the local church, it is less effective in providing pupils with opportunities to develop their awareness of diverse cultures within the United Kingdom. While the governing body are active in supporting the school's improvement, recent changes in its membership mean that systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's effectiveness and acting as a 'critical friend' in the school's development are not a regular feature of their work. Governors have been fully involved in working with the staff and governing body of two local schools in planning a future federation, with the aim that all three schools benefit from the links provided. Partnerships with parents and carers have been strong in the past, but communications about the new leadership team and staff changes have not been sufficiently comprehensive to alleviate parental concerns; the new leadership team are well on the way to improving this.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with a similar range of knowledge and skills to that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress to reach the standards expected by the time they move into Year 1. Attainment in reading, writing and in aspects of mathematics is often higher than that found nationally, whereas children's personal, social and emotional development is below average. In the past their ability to make independent choices, their problem-solving skills and ability to show initiative were less well developed.

It is very early in the term and Reception children are still attending school for morning sessions only, but already they are settled and responding well to the good range of resources available and to the sensitive care of the adults. The sense of purpose is very evident as children show enjoyment in the activities, already making choices for themselves and learning how to select appropriate resources. Good levels of support and encouragement are helping children to tackle new activities and all the adults are engaged in evaluating what the children already know and can do in order to set targets for their next activities. Home visits introduced this year have provided lots of information about the children and are providing the basis of good partnerships with parents and carers. Information about children's interests is already being used to develop the curriculum and areas for learning. The extensive outside area and the two classroom areas provide a stimulating environment in which children are encouraged to experiment and explore. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader is already having a positive impact on the structure of learning and she is developing a strong team of staff. The experienced teaching assistants are being used well not only to support children but also in developing planning and making assessments with the leader's support. Plans for further improvement have been identified but because it is early in the term cannot yet be seen to be having an impact.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

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Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very supportive of the school, but many have concerns over the impact of the changes and disruption last year. A small but significant group identified a number of aspects of the school's work that had declined, especially the quality of communication, particularly about their child's progress and regularity of homework, and most of all their concerns about the number of staff changes. Several parents and carers commented on the positive ethos created by the new headteacher but also recognise that it is still very early in the term for her to have had the opportunity to make many changes. Other parents and carers are looking for reassurance that those aspects that they saw as good in the past will be re-established.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Bartholomew's C of E 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 166 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	66	20	31	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	33	51	29	45	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	14	22	36	55	12	18	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	32	38	58	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	21	32	35	54	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	35	35	54	5	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	43	32	49	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)	18	28	31	48	3	5	3	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	34	34	52	4	6	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	20	37	57	3	5	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	18	37	57	2	3	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	15	23	31	48	4	6	3	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	43	30	46	2	3	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	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 pupils' 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.



20 September 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of St Bartholomew's Church of England First School, Crewkerne TA18 8AS

Thank you for making us so welcome and answering our questions when we visited you recently. You told us that you enjoy school, like your teachers, and really enjoy your activities. Here are some of the things I found out about your school.

- We believe that you are given a satisfactory education.
 - You get a positive start to your schooling in the Reception class.
 - You make the progress expected of you and reach standards in Year 2 and in Year 4 that are similar to those expected for your age. In writing you often make good progress.
 - You behave well. You are polite, friendly and helpful. You told us how everyone gets on well together and that you enjoy helping each other.
 - You told us that you enjoy school and have no concerns over bullying. You have a good understanding of the need to keep yourselves safe and healthy.
 - You look for ways to make the school and the local community a better place to be.
- St Bartholomew's has a new headteacher and deputy headteacher and several new staff who, with all your established staff, are working together to make your school a happy place where you make better progress. We have asked the teachers and governors to do these things to make the school even better.
- To ensure your lessons are more interesting, so that your activities make you think and where you all make good progress in your learning.
 - To plan a curriculum that is meaningful and fun, to enable you to use computers more frequently and to learn about people of other cultures who live in the United Kingdom.
 - For the governing body to find ways to support the staff to make the school an even better place.

Thank you again for helping me with my questions and remember you can play your part in making a really good school by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Hazel Callaghan,

Lead Inspector

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