

# Bromham CofE VC Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109611
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	363754
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 July 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	George Logan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	316
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Virginia Gilks
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Grange Lane Bedford MK43 8NR
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 18 lessons taught by 12 different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and with staff and pupils. They looked at pupils' books, records of their progress, teachers' lesson planning, playtime activities and the school's documentation, which included records of teaching and the main improvement plan. Responses to inspection questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and by 160 parents and carers were also considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- What evidence is there to support the school's view that the current Year 2 and Year 4 pupils have made good progress?
- How well do staff use assessment information to plan work which challenges all pupils to make good progress, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more able?
- How effectively do middle managers discharge their roles and responsibilities?
- How effectively do governors provide challenge for school leaders and contribute to setting a clear direction for the school?

## Information about the school

Bromham Church of England Lower School is larger than most schools of its type. It occupies buildings on two separate sites. Pupils are predominantly White British, with only a small number of pupils from minority ethnic groups. Three of these are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Most children who enter the Reception classes have attended pre-schools and playgroups locally. The school hosts a recently-established Children's Centre which primarily provides outreach support to communities in the outlying area. This provision is subject to separate inspection. The after-school provision on the school premises is independently managed and is also subject to separate inspection.

**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

This is a satisfactory school. Although there are inconsistencies in pupils' learning, the school's commitment to pupils' personal development and their pastoral support is a significant strength and parents and carers appreciate the school's contribution to their children's well-being. Attendance is high. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behaviour is good. They feel very safe and have confidence in adults to deal with their concerns. Pupils have an outstanding awareness of healthy lifestyles and enjoy participating in physical activities. Pupils' contribution to the school in undertaking daily tasks and their involvement with the local community and organisations are outstanding.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Most children enter Reception with skills and experience beyond those normally found. Progress is good in writing and calculation. However, inconsistencies in planning and teaching result in a lack of challenge in other elements of the curriculum and this constrains children's overall progress. The learning environment is underdeveloped. Pupils' learning, progress and achievement in Years 1 and 2 have been inconsistent in recent years. However, satisfactory progress has ensured that current standards at the end of Year 2 remain a little above average. In Years 3 and 4, the pace of learning is more rapid. Progress has improved as a result of intensive support for writing. Assessment practice in Years 3 and 4, particularly the quality of marking and the use of individual targets for learning, is more embedded than elsewhere in the school. As a result, current Year 3 and 4 pupils have made good progress, so that attainment at the end of Year 4 is above average. Pupils do not have regular opportunities to evaluate the quality of their own work.

Overall, the curriculum motivates pupils satisfactorily and provides satisfactory opportunities for cross-curricular use of literacy and numeracy skills. However, effective leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the input of well-prepared teaching assistants, several of whom have specialist skills, have ensured that these pupils make generally good progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear vision for improving the school. Several historic weaknesses around premises, staffing and finance have been successfully resolved. Senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities. However, the monitoring of teaching, learning and attainment has not been rigorous enough, leading to inconsistencies in performance. The school development plan does not focus effectively on the key weaknesses. Even so, the school has many strengths. The good support of parents and carers, better progress and rising standards in Years 3 and 4, as a result of actions taken by senior leaders, and the viable plan to improve assessment and increase pupils' progress further, together with the underlying strength of the governing body, all indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

- Improve the rate of progress made by all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good, so that children's skills are developed more effectively
  - ensuring that lesson planning builds in sufficient challenge, based on purposeful outdoor and indoor activities, to meet the needs of all children, particularly those who learn more quickly
  - developing a more inspiring, attractive and better-organised learning environment, both indoors and outdoors.
- Improve the quality of teaching in order to increase the rate of progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2 so that attainment by the end of Year 2 is higher, by:
  - ensuring that lessons have greater pace and that staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - setting more challenging targets for pupils' attainment
  - making more consistent use of marking which tells pupils what they need to do to move their learning on
  - ensuring that teachers are held more accountable for pupils' progress.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership at all levels by:
  - ensuring that there is greater clarity about the priorities for improvement
  - more rigorous monitoring of standards and quality.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Attainment on entry is above age-related expectations for most children. Learning is most rapid in Years 3 and 4 because activities are usually matched appropriately to the needs of different groups. This is also the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, because of the effective individual support and challenge they receive and the rigorous evaluation of need and monitoring of impact. However, in Years 1 and 2, work does not always have sufficient challenge to move learning on rapidly, particularly for the more able.

Attainment by the end of Year 4 is above the expected level. This was evident, for example, in several Year 4 English lessons on playscripts, where many pupils were writing at levels above those expected. The good progress evident in their current work had been strongly supported by the recent focus on writing but also by pupils' knowledge of their writing targets and by their readiness to track their progress against child-friendly level descriptors. In a Year 3 art lesson, however, pupils' progress in producing work in the style of Turner was more limited because adults tended to intervene and do too much for the pupils, so limiting their independence and development. For some younger pupils, the pace of their mathematics lesson, while appropriately focused on the needs of the middle

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ability pupils, was too slow for able pupils who could have progressed more rapidly. In general, handwriting and the presentation of pupils' written work lacks rigour and embedded quality.

Personal development outcomes are at least good. The school council gives pupils a good awareness of the democratic process. Good social skills and above average basic skills ensure that pupils are well prepared for later life. Their spiritual, moral, social and, particularly their cultural development, is good. Pupils are keenly aware of the challenges of living in very different societies.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with the best practice towards the top of the school. Relationships are good and pupils are keen to learn. The curriculum is generally well adapted for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Skilled support staff work productively with individuals and groups, so ensuring that these pupils make generally good progress. However, given pupils' above average attainment on entry to Year 1, teachers' expectations of the majority of pupils are not high enough in Years 1 and 2 and this limits their progress. Across the school, learning often suffers because of lengthy introductions to lessons.

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The school aims to achieve consistent assessment practice. Individual learning targets are used in some classes but are less evident in others. While work is always marked, pupils are not consistently given guidance as to their next steps in learning. Opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of others are limited. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work are, in general, not high enough. In most lessons teachers keep a close eye on how well pupils are getting on. They use sound questioning techniques to extend learning.

The curriculum offers a satisfactory range of learning experiences, but with an increasing impact on outcomes, most evident in Years 3 and 4. The use of topics promotes cross-curricular skills satisfactorily, particularly in literacy and numeracy. There are good opportunities for art, sport and physical development. Personal, social, health and citizenship education is carefully planned. External partnerships contribute well to extending pupils' learning. A good range of special events, visits, enrichment activities and good extra-curricular provision all make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and enjoyment. Provision for able pupils is a current focus, drawing effectively upon activities arranged by the local school trust.

Transition arrangements are well planned, particularly in supporting pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The school works effectively with support agencies. There is consistently good practice, as seen in several case studies, in supporting the health, social and behavioural needs of pupils in challenging circumstances.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has resolved a number of challenging issues around staffing, resourcing and finance, while maintaining the school's existing strengths, particularly in relation to pupils' good personal development. Together, staff show commitment to the headteacher's vision. Over time, however, the monitoring of teaching and learning has not been rigorous enough, leading to some variability in progress and attainment. Teachers have not been held sufficiently accountable for the progress of the pupils in their own classes. Although tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress are well-established, not all subject leaders are sufficiently rigorous in their evaluation of pupils' work and progress. However, the coordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Careful planning of appropriate provision, rigorous monitoring of support staff and regular review of pupils' progress ensure that these pupils make particularly consistent progress. Equality of opportunity is only satisfactory, as teaching

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and assessment are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the needs of all pupils are consistently met.

The governing body has considerable expertise and has done much to create the structures to support improvement, in finance and access to resources. However, they have not been proactive in holding the school to account around academic outcomes. Governors are well aware of their statutory responsibilities and are proactive in carrying them out. For example, they have recently undertaken an exceptionally thorough review of the school's actions and obligations in relation to community cohesion. The governing body closely monitors all aspects of health and safety, and safeguarding procedures are good.

The school works well with parents and carers, whose views are sought and acted upon. Links and partnerships with agencies ensure good support for pupils who have specific needs. Community cohesion is outstandingly effective. Pupils' understanding of diverse faiths and lifestyles is promoted well through the curriculum. The school has a high profile in the local community. Well-developed international links with India, China and Florida have a very positive impact upon pupils' understanding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Effective induction arrangements, including home visits and links to pre-school settings, contribute to a robust partnership with parents and carers and ensure that children feel safe. Children's welfare is a priority and they consistently receive sensitive, caring support. Children fully understand daily routines, behave well and build good relationships with adults and with other children.

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Provision is sound, overall. Although many children enter Reception at levels above those expected, their skills in calculation and writing are less secure. Satisfactory teaching supports sound progress in most areas, so that outcomes across all areas of learning are above those expected on entry to Year 1. Progress is, however, best in writing and calculation because the teaching is more focused. However, teaching is not sufficiently challenging to support more rapid progress in all areas. Introductions are sometimes lengthy, leading to passive learning and occasional disengagement. In general, planning lacks clarity as to what is to be learned from particular activities. This leads to a relatively slow pace of learning. Overall, however, there is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Despite the strengths in care, the indoor learning environment is uninspiring. Children's work and achievement are not celebrated effectively. Although the outdoor area is used well, some resources are poorly presented and many opportunities lack challenge.

Assessment observations are satisfactory and provide a generally accurate picture of children's learning and attainment. That said, planning does not always take full account of children's prior learning. The school maintains assessment files which track the development and progress of individual children and are shared with parents and carers. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. However, although some weaknesses in provision have been identified, action to resolve these has sometimes been rather slow. However, some aspects of organisation are in process of change, prior to the new school year.

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

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
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

**Views of parents and carers**

Around half of the parents and carers responded to the survey and this is higher than usual. While a few parents and carers raised points specific to individual children, almost all are happy with the school and the care it provides. The vast majority feel that the school engages well with parents and carers and all feel that their children enjoy school. One said, 'An excellent school, showing real commitment to the children, whatever their ability.' Several parents and carers commented positively on the impact of the headteacher and feel that the school is improving. Inspection findings largely support parents' and carers' positive views of the school.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Bromham CofE VC Lower 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 160 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 316 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	126	79	34	21	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	142	89	17	11	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	120	75	39	24	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	115	72	42	26	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	126	79	32	20	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	110	69	49	31	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	119	74	39	24	2	1	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)	133	83	21	13	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	115	72	40	25	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	89	56	60	38	7	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	97	61	54	34	7	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	139	87	20	13	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	136	85	21	13	1	1	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 all 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



18 July 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Bromham CofE VC Lower School, Bedford, MK43 8NR**

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, hearing your views and spending time in lessons. We found that although yours is a satisfactory school, it has many strengths. These are the things we liked best.

You have good attitudes to learning.

You reach above average standards by the end of Year 4.

You feel safe in school, behave well and attend as often as you possibly can.

You make a very good contribution to school and have outstandingly good links with the local community.

Staff care for you and support you well.

You have a very good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and staying fit.

The curriculum offers you some interesting topics, activities and visits. The provision for clubs and after-school activities is good.

Those of you who need extra help in lessons are supported very effectively and generally make good progress.

The headteacher and governors are keen to make the school better.

To help you do better, we have asked the school to do the following things.

Ensure that children in Reception are given lots of challenging activities so that they make better progress.

Ensure that teaching in Years 1 and 2 provides you with greater challenge so that you make more rapid progress.

Ensure that school leaders are clear about the most important priorities for the school and are really rigorous in checking the quality of your work.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan

Lead inspector

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