

Bentley St Paul's CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115151
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	311858
Inspection date	26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	205
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carol Tomsett
Headteacher	Dr Duncan Ramsey
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Ashwells Road Pilgrims Hatch Brentwood Essex CM15 9SE
Telephone number	01277 372295
Fax number	01277 375748

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The following issues were investigated: the pupils' achievement and their personal development, the quality of teaching and learning and how well the school's leadership promotes high standards. Evidence was gathered from observation of lessons, the pupils' work, discussion with them and with staff, along with a scrutiny of school documents and parent questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Bentley St. Paul's CofE Primary School is close to average in size. The school population represents a mix of social backgrounds, but pupils are mainly White British. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is close to the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average, but the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is greater. The school has won many awards, including Healthy Schools, Sports Active Mark (Gold), Investors in People, the School Inclusion Award and the British Council European Projects Award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The excellent quality of education from Reception to the end of Year 6 leads to pupils making outstanding progress. Attainment on entry is close to national expectations but, through the pursuit of excellence based on Christian values, pupils achieve standards that are exceptionally and consistently high in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Standards are also high in history, music, physical education, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Personal development is also outstanding. The pupils grow spiritually and socially to become confident, caring and considerate young people by the time they leave.

The school fulfils its mission to be a place where all children are treated as special. It is a very inclusive school, in which all are helped to make excellent progress, no matter what their background or abilities. Pupils whose family origins are outside the United Kingdom and those with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well and thrive as important members of the school community. A girl proudly declared that all children are equal here and this is one of the many reasons why she loves coming to school. The only improvement she could think of would be to make the school day longer! Parents also value the way that the school develops a love of learning in their children. The school's mission is also to seek excellence in all aspects of its work and it has succeeded.

The atmosphere in school is very positive. Pupils' good behaviour and work are praised fairly and consistently. This successfully encourages positive attitudes to school. Much of the teaching is outstanding. This leads to pupils genuinely enjoying their lessons. Relationships are excellent, as is the teachers' management of their classes. As a result, behaviour is excellent. Pupils enjoy their lessons because they are so interesting and relevant to their needs. They learn to collaborate and work well as part of a group. This, along with the excellent progress they make in literacy, numeracy and ICT, ensures that they are prepared very well indeed for their future lives.

The curriculum is outstanding and this encourages them to enjoy school because they are interested and challenged. Excellent coverage of world religions and well chosen visits, including residential visits and trips abroad, help to prepare them for life in our culturally diverse society. There is a very good range of clubs and an excellent sporting programme. German is taught to the older pupils and, as an excellent example of inclusiveness, Makaton signing is taught so that pupils can communicate with classmates having speech and language impairments. Pupils' great enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance and very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils willingly take on responsibility to act as helpers and leaders, especially in the playground. The work of the school council is very productive and the committee members' participation influences decisions that enhance pupils' daily lives. There are many positive examples of the council's work, for instance the improvements to school toilets and to the outside play areas to name two. There are also examples of support for the wider community. The children raised large sums of money to support their partner school in Kenya, enabling a new classroom block to be built. The school's emphasis on exercise ensures that pupils can readily explain the reasons for taking regular exercise and enjoy eating healthily.

Teachers and support assistants know pupils exceptionally well. Assessment information is used very effectively indeed to pinpoint those who are at risk of falling behind and to make sure that they have the support they need to catch up. When teachers mark children's work, they

do so with a detail and helpfulness that considerably helps pupils to learn from their mistakes and improve their work. The marking in Year 6 is especially thorough and constructively critical.

Pupils benefit from excellent care, guidance and support. Child protection and health and safety procedures are all firmly in place. Vulnerable pupils' needs are met very well indeed, resulting in them making excellent progress. All the pupils spoken to agree that they feel safe and cared for in school. Almost all pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities attain nationally expected standards and many on the special educational needs register make so much progress that they are able to be removed from it during their time in Year 6.

Outstanding leadership and management, under the thoughtful and dedicated leadership of the headteacher, have brought about significant improvements over recent years. The curriculum has become rich and varied, the tracking of pupils' progress is increasingly effective, and standards, already high, are rising. There was a setback in 2007, when a number of Year 6 pupils failed by a very small number of marks to gain the higher grade in mathematics. The reasons for this have been analysed and as a result considerably more emphasis is being placed on mental mathematics and problem solving. Current standards in mathematics are well above average. The school improvement plan prioritises the correct areas of the school's work for further development. Governance is outstanding. Governors monitor the school extremely well; they have a strategic role in its leadership and hold the school to account with the appropriate balance of support and challenge. Capacity to improve is excellent, as demonstrated by the improvements secured since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children start with levels of knowledge and skills that are generally close to those expected but skills in communication and calculation are slightly below the levels expected. Children make excellent progress because of the quality of the teaching, stimulating activities and the individual care and attention they receive. Relationships are excellent, so that children feel welcome, happy and are strongly encouraged to succeed. They behave very well indeed and enjoy school, partly because of the ways that they are helped to relate to and work with each other and make friends. The oldest children in the school, for example, eat with the youngest and often play with them. The provision for the Foundation Stage was criticised in the last report. It has improved greatly since then. A new, very well equipped classroom has been built with a good outside learning environment. The children's progress is tracked and recorded regularly. By the time children complete their year in Reception, they have, overall, exceeded the expected standards in literacy and numeracy for their age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve and sustain pupils' competence and confidence in problem solving in mathematics.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 February 2008

Dear Children,

Inspection of Bentley St Paul's CofE Primary School, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 9SE

Thank you very much for making me so welcome at your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you and I particularly enjoyed the singing in assembly, both from the choir and the whole school. I would like to say a special thank you to the children I met at lunchtime, who told me about what it is like to be a pupil at your school. They were especially proud of the ways that you help others less fortunate than you and I was very impressed with the ways all of you work together and help each other.

You all told me how much you like your school, and I liked it very much too. It gives you an excellent education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you extremely well. By the end of Year 6, you have made excellent progress. You are much better at reading, writing and numeracy than most children in other schools. You behave extremely well and enjoy your learning.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading it exceptionally well. Your headteacher and all his staff are determined that you will have the very best education. I have asked him to make sure that you get lots of practice in solving mathematical problems so that you reach the highest standards in numeracy.

Once again thank you for a delightful day. Keep doing your best and enjoy your time in this outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector