

Bathwick St Mary Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109256
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	324933
Inspection date	28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Lorna Brackstone HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	224
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Moss
Headteacher	Kevin Burnett
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Darlington Road Bath BA2 6NN
Telephone number	01225 465654
Fax number	01225 484289

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The effectiveness of the provision found in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- The strategies used to improve attainment in writing, particularly for boys.
- How well pupils understand what the next step in their learning will be.
- How well governors fulfil their role as a 'critical friend'.

Evidence was gained from visiting classrooms, looking at pupils' work, and scrutinising documentation and information on pupils' progress. The inspectors also attended an assembly, analysed the parent questionnaires and met with senior leaders, pupils, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a residential area on the eastern outskirts of Bath, which consists mainly of privately owned homes. The vast majority of pupils are White British and only a very small number use English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or physical disabilities is well below average. This includes a few pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, and those who have moderate problems with their learning in literacy and numeracy. Children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) education in a Reception class where they all start on a part-time basis in September at the beginning of the academic year. Many of them have previously attended a range of local pre-school settings. The school has won numerous local and national awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Bathwick St Mary provides an outstanding quality of education, largely because of the headteacher's exceptional educational drive and energy. As one parent commented, 'The headteacher is a source of inspiration. His commitment and enthusiasm towards the running of the school is beyond reproach.' Coupled with the successful partnership he shares with his excellent staff, and outstanding governor involvement, the headteacher ensures that the pupils receive the best possible preparation for the next stage of their education. Nearly all parents agree that this is an excellent school, and one family who explained that 'we couldn't dream of a better place for our children' sums up their views.

- Most children start school with knowledge and skills that are above the expected level for their age. They are keen to learn and the high quality provision in the EYFS ensures that they make outstanding progress in all areas of learning, starting Year 1 of the National Curriculum with confidence and good levels in the basic skills. As the pupils move through the school they make consistently rapid progress in each year group. The school's national award for Basic Skills reflects the exceptionally high standards that pupils achieve in English, mathematics and science. Other awards for outstanding attainment in information and communication technology (ICT), art and sporting activities, coupled with their high quality musical talents, illustrate the extremely varied and well-rounded pupil achievement. As one parent explained, 'I am continually amazed by the progress my child is making. What more could a parent ask for
- ' However, the headteacher, staff and governors are never complacent because they feel that 'an immaculate garden soon grows weeds if unattended'. So despite having such exceptional standards, they have accurately identified pupils' writing particularly that of the boys, as an area for further development. By introducing topics that captivate the interest of the boys, and by exploring different ways of recording, they are working hard to rectify this.

The strong moral code ensures that pupils behave exceptionally well. They love coming to school because they are eager to learn and teachers make lessons extremely interesting. The consolidation of knowledge and skills develops exceptionally well across different subjects by using very well planned themes. For example, Year 3 pupils learn about the Victorians in history and their knowledge develops by writing about life during this period in literacy lessons. They use their numeracy skills to work out the timeline of Queen Victoria's life and discover the intricacies of William Morris's designs when they sketch their own Victorian patterns. Teachers have extremely high expectations of their pupils' work and this is why completed work is always of an excellent standard. Outstanding use of questioning to promote deeper learning and excellent use of resources, such as electronic whiteboards and small wipeable boards, ensure that the pupils are very well focused, fully involved, and learning is moving at a fast pace.

Parents agree that 'the teachers are extremely skilled professionals', and this is reflected in the very secure assessment programmes and exceptional tracking systems which ensure that all teachers have an excellent knowledge of what stage each pupil is at in their learning. Detailed target-setting systems ensure that pupils know what they need to do to reach the next step in their learning. However, although teachers provide regular verbal feedback when marking books, they are fully aware that even more written guidance would support the pupils to a greater depth. The exceptionally strong partnerships that the school has developed with agencies that support provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that the

pupils with specific problems receive the best possible care and are fully included in the life of the school.

Staff provide excellent pastoral care, guidance and support to the pupils. The school has very secure and up-to-date procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare. These are implemented very diligently and effectively to sustain the pupils' well-being. Consequently, pupils feel safe because they know that the school does all it can to keep them secure. The views of many of the parents are echoed in a comment made by one who feels 'that every member of staff is easily approachable and everyone has my child's best interests at heart'.

The school's award for healthy living exemplifies the commitment made to ensuring that pupils know how to eat sensibly, exercise regularly and understand the changes that happen to their body. They confidently explain what a balanced diet is and understand the importance of warming up when playing sport. The extensive range of sporting activities that the pupils are involved in during lessons, in extra-curricular clubs and through the extended links with the cricket ground and a local independent school emphasise exceptional personal commitment to maintaining high levels of fitness and developing quality skills.

All pupils feel very much part of school life, and those in Year 6 proudly talk of being a 'Blue Hat' in the playground when they help others who may be feeling unhappy. They are confident that adults hear their views or concerns through the school council or via a 'worry box'. As one parent commented, 'Not only am I pleased with my daughter's achievements academically, I am also very happy with her as she is developing socially... I believe the school turns out very polite, respectful, and caring young people.'

Pupils are extremely thoughtful and enthusiastically raise money for both local and national charities. Involvement in singing events at Bath Abbey and the Guildhall, and participation in challenges and competitions ensure that they make a positive contribution to the local community. Visits to museums at Radstock and the Rhondda Valley encourage them to compare and contrast differing mining communities. Pupils reflect on and discuss very knowledgeably other countries, cultures and faiths because of the very popular international weeks, which are organised by the school regularly.

The school has taken effective steps since the last inspection to improve its provision for gifted and talented pupils and supervision during lunchtime. Leaders and managers have an extremely sharp understanding of its strengths, clearly identify areas that need improving and governors act as very effective critical friends. Although self-evaluation is an exceptionally strong feature of the school, documents and future development plans are unnecessarily unwieldy and complicated. This makes analysis of the outcomes time consuming and confusing and puts unnecessary burdens on senior leaders and managers.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The EYFS is outstanding overall and very well led. Relationships are excellent. As one parent explained, the children are all 'treated very much as individuals' and settle into school life quickly and happily. Teaching staff encourage children so that they gain self-confidence and learn how to concentrate well. The welfare provision is very impressive. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent and induction procedures extremely well structured. Most children quickly learn how to play successfully with others, and they behave exceptionally well; overall, children's personal development is outstanding. Children have good access to outside learning activities, but the leaders are fully aware that this does not yet routinely contribute

fully to all the six areas of learning. This is because they are awaiting the arrival of a canopy so that children can go outside in all weathers, and new playground markings, which will make their numeracy activities even more fun. Children enjoy choosing activities and are engrossed in what they do. They work well in groups with an adult, and they thoroughly enjoy learning as activities are fun. There is a very good focus on discussion activities. For example, they talked excitedly about making pictures with different shapes and confidently named circles, oblongs, squares and triangles. Children enjoy many creative activities, especially dressing up and pretending to be 'explorers finding penguins in the South Pole'. There are plenty of opportunities for children to explore their senses. The promotion of early reading and writing skills is extremely good, and supported by effective teaching of letters and sounds (phonics). Teachers plan a very good range of activities so that children can learn in different ways. Adults work well together and are clear about the aims and vision within the EYFS and across the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Simplify the school's self-evaluation and development plan so that it is less complicated when evaluating outcomes.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 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

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

29 January 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Bathwick St Mary Church of England Primary School, Bath BA2 6NN

You may remember that two inspectors came to visit your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed spending time with you and finding out about Bathwick St Mary. We would like to say a particular thank you to those pupils who talked to us about life at your school.

We agree with your parents that Bathwick St Mary's provides you with an excellent education. You do fantastically well – in fact, much better than other schools. We were very impressed with the way you present your work and that you all know your targets for improvement. Your teachers are excellent and make sure that you always try your best in your learning. They plan extremely interesting activities and this encourages you to learn because the topics they choose are meaningful to you. The way that you are involved in the many sporting and musical opportunities and your participation in local festivals and competitions helps you to acquire excellent key skills for the future.

You really enjoy coming to school and it is very clear that you take a full part in its life. We enjoyed hearing about the trips you go on, especially the residential visits to the Forest of Dean and the Isle of Wight. You feel safe because the school looks after you very well and you told us there is always someone you can talk to about a problem. You are rightly proud of the way in which you help each other and we were most impressed with the way that the 'Blue Hats' make sure everyone is fully valued and included in the life of the school. You are very knowledgeable about how to keep your body fit and you know what foods are good for you to eat.

Your headteacher and the other adults do an excellent job and make sure that you receive a superb education. We have asked the adults to do the following to make the school even better.

- Simplify the paperwork that the adults in charge of your school use when they are evaluating its success and planning for its future.

Once again, thank you for your help. Keep doing your best.

Yours faithfully

Lorna Brackstone Her Majesty's Inspector