

Bentley St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Ashwells Road, Bentley, Brentwood, CM15 9SE

Inspection dates 12–13 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, governing body and senior leadership team are ambitious for the school. They know the school's strengths and areas for development and they have planned actions well to ensure that teaching, learning and progress are improving.
- Pupils reach standards in English and mathematics that are at least above average by the time they leave school.
- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Most teachers plan well and inspire pupils so that they enjoy learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils have the help that they need to make progress.
- The teaching of subjects through topics enhances pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and enables them to learn well about the wider world.
- The school is a happy and harmonious community. Pupils behave well and feel safe.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that widen their experience and develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There has been some inconsistency over time in pupils' progress at Key Stage 2.
- The recent improvements in checks made by subject and key stage leaders have not yet had a strong enough impact on progress in some areas.
- Although some marking and feedback is exemplary, teachers' practice is not consistent across all key stages. As a result, pupils do not always know what they have to do to improve.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to make choices for themselves or to develop as independent learners.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, some of them jointly with members of the leadership team. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits around the school.
- Meetings were held with governors and two different groups of pupils. Several meetings were also held with school staff, including senior leaders and teachers responsible for subjects and key stages. There was a discussion with the local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of information published on the school website, parent and pupil surveys, 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- They looked closely at a range of documentation, including information on pupils' performance, the school's own analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, improvement plans, safeguarding and behaviour policies, and records and documents relating to the targets set for teachers to improve their work. Inspectors also reviewed examples of pupil's past and present work.

Inspection team

Jackie Easter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Graham Gossage

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bentley St Paul's is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is well below the national average. This is funding provided to schools by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, at school action plus and through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and the consistency of progress pupils make at Key Stage 2 by:
 - making sure that all marking is as good as the best within the school
 - giving pupils the opportunity to respond to teachers' comments in their books
 - providing more opportunities for choice and independence so that pupils are able to challenge themselves in their learning.
- Consolidate recent improvements in the work of subject and key stage leaders by making sure they use performance data systematically and effectively to check the progress of all pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. The wide range of carefully planned indoor and outdoor activities means that most children reach at least expected levels in their knowledge and understanding by the time they move up to Year 1.
- Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and the strong focus on improving the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) resulted in improved outcomes in the national screening check for Year 1 pupils in 2013. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is above average, with the best results in writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment has been at least above average and high in some years since the previous inspection.
- Pupils read with interest and enthusiasm. Reading is taught well and attainment in reading is generally above national expectations in all year groups. A range of focused support programmes is in place so that most pupils make good progress with their reading. The school works extremely effectively with parents to encourage reading and to develop pupils' independent reading habits.
- Current school data indicate that achievement is improving in English and mathematics and that the majority of pupils are making at least expected progress and a large proportion are making better than expected progress. Progress in writing is improving as pupils now have more opportunities to write in a range of styles for different audiences and purposes. The school has also improved systems for tracking individual pupil's progress and giving focused support to individuals whose progress is not as good as it should be.
- The small number of pupils who are eligible for extra government funding through the pupil premium make good progress which enables them to attain as well as other pupils in English and mathematics. However, there were too few pupils eligible for the pupil premium in 2013 to report their attainment in detail without identifying individuals.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported in class by a carefully planned curriculum and a range of teaching approaches matched to their needs. Additional adults make a strong contribution to pupils' good progress and, as a result, their achievement is good. More-able pupils make expected or better than expected progress from their starting points in writing and in mathematics.
- Pupils generally make at least the expected amount of progress at Key Stage 2 but there have been some inconsistencies over time, particularly in the proportion making better than expected progress in writing. Following a dip in 2012 in the proportion of pupils who left having made good progress at Key Stage 2, there was some improvement in 2013. The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in reading and mathematics in 2013 exceeded the national average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and it is sometimes outstanding. Teachers plan well for the different pupils in their classes. They make sure that lessons build on previous learning and they check pupils' understanding and progress carefully as lessons progress.
- In Reception, teachers plan a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities that interest the pupils and help them to enjoy learning. There is a good balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities and these are well supported by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teaching assistants. As a result, children are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Teachers in all key stages make it clear to pupils what they are meant to learn and what they are expected to achieve. Pupils are actively encouraged to check their own learning against success criteria and also to give feedback to each other on their work.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is consistently good. The recent changes to the English curriculum and the introduction of topic work that is linked to themes are beginning to help improve writing standards. Pupils now have greater opportunities to write in different ways, although aspects of the topic work are not as strong as they could be in allowing for independent and imaginative responses from pupils.
- The classroom environment and displays around the school support learning exceptionally well. They are vibrant, stimulating, actively involve pupils, and teachers make good use of displays, such as the 'working walls', to promote learning in lessons.
- Teachers use a wide variety of techniques to check pupils' understanding, including good questioning skills. Pupils are encouraged to talk to one another, share their ideas and deepen their understanding, and they do so cooperatively. All lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to plan the next steps in learning and ways of dealing with difficult ideas and concepts. For example, in a mathematics lesson on fractions the teacher arranged pupil groups and planned tasks and activities so that the most able were really challenged to make progress and achieve at a high level.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to ensure that pupils have the help that they need to make progress. A range of resources, activities and carefully targeted support help pupils from different starting points to achieve well. The school makes good use of teaching assistants to work with small groups.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. There are examples of exemplary marking where teachers give constructive feedback so that pupils know how to improve their work and they give pupils time to act on the advice they are given and respond to the advice. This practice is not yet consistent across all of the classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils take pride in their school and are positive about their learning. They say that 'the school is a kind place' and appreciate their teachers because they 'make learning fun'.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons, around the school and in the playground are good. They are friendly and courteous to adults and relationships between pupils are extremely positive. The school's values are used to consistently reinforce the importance of good relationships and consideration towards others which results in a caring and harmonious community. Pupils are polite, caring and show respect for others.
- In lessons, pupils engage well with their work and participate cooperatively in group tasks and discussions. Well-established classroom routines, such as working with a 'talk partner' are used consistently and pupils organise themselves in pairs and groups quickly and sensibly. In all classrooms, there is a purposeful atmosphere and pupils' behaviour supports their learning well.
- Pupils attend school regularly and are punctual. Overall levels of attendance are consistently above the national average and, in the rare cases of irregular attendance, the school has worked effectively with other agencies to ensure that it has improved. There have been no exclusions in the past few years.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They know how to keep themselves safe and understand bullying in all of its forms. They say that bullying rarely happens and they are confident that if it did, their teachers would deal with it immediately. School records indicate that instances of unkind behaviour are dealt with effectively.
- Most of the parents who spoke to inspectors or who responded to Parent View were very positive and said that their children were happy in school and felt safe and well looked after.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, who has joined the school since the last inspection, her deputy headteacher and the governors have a clear vision and high ambitions for the school. They understand its strengths and how it could be developed further.
- The headteacher tracks achievement data rigorously and ensures that appropriate action is taken to address any concerns about pupils' attainment and progress. This helps to ensure that pupils receive equality opportunities and that there is no discrimination.
- The curriculum is broad and offers a good balance of subjects and themes for pupils to explore and develop their skills, including those of literacy and numeracy. Pupils learn German in Key Stage 2 and the school offers a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, such as team sports, the choir and the exchange visits with a school in Belgium.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, and enables pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. It has very strong links with the local church which takes part in assemblies and contributes to securing the caring ethos of the school.
- Primary school sport funding has been used to invest in new equipment for the Early Years Foundation Stage and for additional sports coaching alongside teachers to develop their

confidence in teaching physical education. There has also been an increase in the range of sport clubs that take place after school. Leaders plan to measure the effect of these actions but the headteacher believes that they can already see an impact in terms of pupils' enthusiasm and engagement.

- Teaching and learning are reviewed regularly and there has been a very strong focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching across the school. Teachers meet regularly to share good practice. The 'professional partner' programme has been particularly successful in helping teachers to work together more effectively to ensure that learning and progress are improved.
- All teachers have clear targets for improvement. The management of teachers' performance and salary progression is closely linked with the quality of teaching and learning.
- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has restructured the leadership team and focused on developing the role of subject and key stage leaders so that they now take a greater role in monitoring pupils' progress in the areas that they oversee. However, they are not yet making full use of performance data to check pupils' progress and, thus, contribute to school improvement.
- The local authority has given only light touch support for the school due to its previous good track record of attainment. However, the school has bought in additional support and training to support specific issues and to give leaders an external view on the effectiveness of their improvement plans.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body works in close partnership with the headteacher in setting priorities and direction for the school. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They understand the range of available data and use this information well to ask challenging questions. They visit the school regularly and meet pupils, parents and staff. Governors undertake training on a regular basis and, as a result, they can offer good support and challenge to the school leadership team. They make sure that statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding. They have a good understanding of school finances, know how the pupil premium funding is being used and the effect it is having on the progress of pupils for whom it is intended. They are clear about how teachers' performance is managed, the implementation of the national Teachers Standards and the link with teachers' pay and progression up the salary scale.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115151
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	427216

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 of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Frier
Headteacher	Louise Putt
Date of previous school inspection	26 February 2008
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