

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Bierton Church of England Combined School

Parsons Lane, Bierton, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 5DF

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 November 2024

Outcome

Bierton Church of England Combined School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Bierton, every pupil has the opportunity to 'let their light shine'. There is high ambition for pupils' academic outcomes and in the way they are prepared for life beyond school. Pupils achieve well with their learning and in many areas they excel. They are happy and proud of their school.

The school sets high and clear expectations for pupils' behaviour. Staff are kind and nurturing. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They listen carefully and give full attention to their learning. Over lunchtimes, pupils of all ages play happily together and enjoy the wide range of activities and equipment on offer. They know that if they have any worries their caring adults will always help.

The school's curriculum and wider opportunities mean that pupils have an exceptional understanding about diversity and difference. They are welcoming and accepting of all. This goes beyond tolerance and is demonstrated in the empathy, understanding and compassion they show to others. Their links with a school in Malawi gives them a global perspective about school experiences. Pupils participate in and drive many fundraising initiatives. They contribute to community events through their 'active citizen' projects, such as litter picking and setting up Christmas decorations at the church.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's well-designed curriculum reflects its high ambition for all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have their needs accurately identified and met. This means that all pupils access the full curriculum breadth and experience, including those in the 'Willow' nurture group.

A love for reading permeates through the whole school. From the start of Nursery, children enjoy hearing stories and retelling or acting them out with their friends. Throughout the school, reading is taught well using a consistent phonics-based approach. Pupils read with increasing fluency and comprehension. Those who need extra help are supported very well and they catch up quickly. Pupils encounter a wide range of books and text extracts. Their regular class story times and interactions with authors enthral and entertain them. They are inspired to read widely and often.

Pupils remember their learning well. Current, recent, and long-term learning is revisited and checked often. Teachers successfully address any misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils are prepared for what comes next in their learning, for example through pre-teaching sessions. In many subjects, the school has clear oversight of how well pupils are learning what they need to. In a few subjects, where curriculum changes are more recent, the school is still building a clear picture of how well pupils know and can remember their learning.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They are well supported by skilled and knowledgeable subject leaders. Teachers model and expect pupils to use subject-specific vocabulary. In mathematics, pupils have many opportunities to practise their strategies and methods. This means that they can successfully apply them in mathematical reasoning and problem solving. Recent changes to the writing curriculum show a positive impact. Pupils are creative writers who use ambitious vocabulary to entertain and inform the reader. However, the curriculum is not as successful in developing their grammatical understanding.

Pupils participate well in lessons and in wider school activities. They are confident and enthusiastic learners. When working in pairs or in small groups, they work well collaboratively. Pupils show respect for others' views and opinions. The school allows many opportunities for pupils to debate, discuss and assume responsibilities. Those in leadership roles as house captains or school councillors take pride in the way they represent their peers and contribute to school life.

Opportunities beyond the curriculum are rich and plentiful. They include an extensive range of well-attended after-school clubs, trips and sports events. Pupils benefit from their high-quality interactions with the local community. This gives pupils a sense of belonging and an understanding about how they can contribute to wider society. Regular careers events build pupils' aspirations and widen their horizons. They enthuse about the people they meet and, as a result, make links between what they learn at school with their future goals.

The governing body has a strong strategic understanding of the school. It receives the information it needs to support and appropriately challenge school leaders. Staff are incredibly proud to be part of the school team. They are well supported in terms of their workload and well-being and through their extensive development and training opportunities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- In a few subjects, leaders do not know how well the intended curriculum is delivered or how well it is understood by pupils. This means that leaders do not always know how well pupils are learning. The school should continue with its work to embed assessment procedures and use the information to ensure pupils are learning all they need to.
- Changes to the English curriculum are showing a positive impact but some are in their infancy. This means that pupils' written outcomes are not as strong as they could be. The school should continue to embed these curriculum improvements so that pupils' writing further improves.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110417 |
| Local authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 10341295 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 486 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Tim Dutfield |
| Headteacher | Jenny Martin |
| Website | www.biertoncombined.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 22 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school has nursery provision for 24 children.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England primary school within the Diocese of Oxford. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in February 2020. The next section 48 inspection is due in 2025.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector met with school leaders and with representatives from the governing body, diocese and the local authority.
- The inspector evaluated responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and spoke to pupils to gather their views.
- The inspector analysed responses to the staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses. They also spoke with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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