

Bierton Church of England Combined School

Parsons Lane, Bierton, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 5DF

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- After dips in performance since the last inspection, the rate of improvement has accelerated and the school now provides a good quality of education again.
- The staff work well together as a united team, determined to enhance provision for the pupils.
- The newly appointed headteacher and assistant headteachers have a good grasp of what works well in the school and where further improvements can be made.
- Staff in all roles have strong working relationships with the pupils and provide good academic and pastoral support for them.
- The quality of teaching is consistently effective because there is a good level of challenge in the work provided for all pupils.
- From their different starting points, pupils achieve well. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They get on well together and behave well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Senior staff recognise where and why teaching is successful. They model good practice and share expertise with colleagues. This has a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- The governing body has improved its overall effectiveness through developing governors' roles. They are now in a stronger position to ask searching questions and to support leaders in improving teaching.
- Provision for children in the early years is good. Staff are enthusiastic and provide an interesting range of activities that capture the children's imagination.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, owing to the school's strong focus on moral development and taking on responsibilities.
- Parents appreciate the strengths of the school and are confident that their children are happy and are kept safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils make better than expected progress in their work.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not always secure and pupils' work is sometimes untidily presented.
- Leaders' monitoring of key areas is not rigorous enough to identify exactly what needs to improve further.
- Assessments of children's skills on entry to the school do not always take sufficient account of their range of abilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 18 lessons and a range of other school activities. Some lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher. Inspectors looked in detail at the work in pupils' books and heard several pupils read.
- Planned and informal discussions were held with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, the early years leader, the special educational needs coordinator and the literacy leader.
- The lead inspector spoke to representatives of the governing body. She also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors considered 34 responses to the parent questionnaire (Parent View). They also took into account written communications from some parents and spoke to several at the start of both inspection days. Inspectors also considered 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school's own information about pupils' progress and the monitoring of teaching and learning. They also took account of records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Glen Goddard	Additional Inspector
Sukwinder Samra	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- Most of the classes consist of mixed-aged groups. Children attend the Reception classes full time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding (the pupil premium) is less than half the national average. The pupil premium is extra funding provided by the government to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- In September 2014, the recently appointed deputy headteacher took on the role of acting headteacher and two other staff assumed the roles of acting assistant headteachers. In April 2015 these members of staff were appointed to the posts on a permanent basis. Since the last inspection there have been several other staff changes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable more pupils to make better than expected progress in their work by improving the accuracy of their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Improve the monitoring of the work of the school by:
 - ensuring that staff rigorously check the tasks provided for the pupils, the work in their books and data about progress across the age range in order to identify further areas for improvement
 - making sure that initial assessments of children's skills on entry to the school take full account of their range of abilities
 - checking that pupils' work is always neatly presented.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has made a strong start to the role and is driving school improvement well. This follows a period when the progress pupils made had declined. The headteacher and senior colleagues have a clear understanding of what works well and where further improvements are required. School leaders have created a culture of success where pupils of all abilities grow in confidence, behave well and make good progress.
- The headteacher is well supported by the assistant headteachers who model very effective teaching. They work well with colleagues, including in a coaching capacity to identify where teaching can be improved. Joint lesson observations show senior staff correctly identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching.
- Staff with key subject responsibilities have a good grasp of data and of teaching in parts of the school but less awareness of whole-school provision. Staff and, where appropriate, governors monitor different aspects of school life, including lesson activities but they sometimes lack rigour in identifying and addressing key priorities. This limits their ability to identify further areas for improvement and increase progress.
- Staff work enthusiastically with colleagues, external advisors and other schools. Responses to the staff questionnaire note the opportunities for additional training and 'the united working of the school to follow our school values'.
- In the last year, several changes have been made in teaching and learning that have boosted the rate of progress pupils make. Standards have often been above national average but inconsistent, and pupils' progress has been no more than adequate. Staff now expect more of pupils and the proportion making good or better progress is growing.
- Key to recent improvements has been the better collection and use of assessment information. This has enabled staff to address gaps in pupils' learning and improve the progress that individuals and groups make from their different starting points. While more remains to be done, the use of data in planning activities for different groups of pupils is now secure and leading to better rates of progress for all.
- The curriculum successfully focuses on the development of key skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This helps prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. Pupils benefit from a good range of opportunities to develop their writing skills in different subjects, including in religious education. Staff have developed the use of topics that motivate the boys to write at greater length and in depth.
- Leadership of the early years provision is good, with staff working enthusiastically to provide a stimulating environment that develops the children's interest in learning. Leadership of special educational needs is also effective and ensures good quality support for the pupils.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. There is a strong focus on pupils' moral development and the 'manner of the week'. Pupils readily identify that their actions should reflect 'The five Rs' of readiness, remembering, reflectiveness, resourcefulness and resilience.
- The school promotes pupils' understanding of British values well. This includes a focus on democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect. The school gives pupils opportunities to understand democracy better by electing their own representatives for different roles. When finding out about the rule of law, they work with local police and magistrates to understand their roles in the local community. This helps ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Links with parents are good. All of those spoken to, together with the majority who responded to the inspection questionnaire, think their children are doing well at Bierton. Several note approvingly of the recent changes and the accessibility of senior staff. A few parents outlined their concerns about recent changes in pastoral care arrangements. Discussions with leaders and governors show all staff deployments are extensively discussed before decisions are made and that pastoral matters are the responsibility of all staff and a very high priority in school.
- The local authority brokers support for the school from external sources. This is effective and has helped the school move forwards. The work done this year has rightly identified, and helped to address, weaknesses in the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress.
- Staff training to protect pupils is up to date and policies are reviewed regularly. The school carries out all the checks required to ensure the suitability of staff to work with the pupils. These arrangements meet current safeguarding requirements.
- School leaders use pupil premium funding very carefully to support the progress and development of disadvantaged pupils. This is prioritised well by the school and seen in the recent appointment of a

member of staff to oversee this area. Good quality support is provided for the pupils that is well tailored to their individual needs with more-able pupils being challenged well. Measures such as this illustrate the school's clear commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all and countering discrimination of any kind.

- The extra physical education and sports funding is used effectively. Additional swimming lessons are provided for those not achieving the target for their age and a range of sports activities extend pupils' skills and confidence.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the school is good. This has improved during the year because governors recognised they were not well informed about all aspects of school life. They have elected new leaders and re-organised their pattern of meetings and committees. Governors are now no longer just supportive of the school but are developing their role as critical friends well. They have undertaken effective training and now understand more about what the data tell them, not just about standards but also about progress.
 - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and the links between performance management procedures and teachers' pay. They recognise additional awards are tightly linked to pupils' progress and not simply the standards achieved. They are developing a series of focused visits to ensure they understand more about the work of the school at first hand.
 - Governors check that the school meets the requirements with regard to safeguarding pupils by regularly reviewing its policies and procedures, and ensuring that they are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave consistently well in and around school; they are polite and helpful and get on well with others. They move around the school in a very sensible manner. Observations in the playground show they enjoy each other's company and play well together.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils have strong working relationships with staff and are keen to gain their approval. Many offer ideas in discussions and they generally value each other's ideas and opinions.
- Samples of work in pupils' books and observations in lessons show that they concentrate well and try hard with their work, although it is not always as neatly presented as it could be.
- Attendance is above national averages. Pupils say they like coming to school and particularly enjoy practical activities and mathematics. Parents believe pupils' behaviour is generally good and that they are looked after well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Procedures to safeguard the pupils are implemented well. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They have benefited from taking part in recent discussions about smoking and how to lead healthy lives, and from discussing with police and fire officers how to stay safe in different situations.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They know this is a deliberate and repeated action. They can identify the different types of bullying that could occur, including name-calling and cyber-bullying. They report that bullying of any type would never be tolerated in school.
- The school places a strong focus on the moral development of pupils, including through discussions about respecting everyone. The pupils know that comments about the appearance of others are not appropriate. They are confident that, should they have any concerns, these will be acted upon. Pupils appreciate that their pastoral care is a high priority for all staff.

The quality of teaching is good

- The scrutiny of work in pupils' books, data about progress and visits to lessons confirm the school's own view that teaching is good across the school. Records show that there has been some very effective teaching over time, but this has been patchy. Information shows the overall quality of teaching has improved during the year and is now consistently effective. Teaching has a positive impact on progress including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers and support staff share strong working relationships with the pupils. This is a friendly and caring school where all staff build pupils' confidence in their skills so that they have the chance to succeed both

academically and socially. Because pupils are keen to please the adults they work with, most try hard with their work.

- The level of challenge provided by teachers is good and well matched to pupils' different abilities. For example, a group of more-able Year 5 and Year 6 pupils made excellent progress when animatedly taking part in discussions about a video clip that they watched as part of their work on anti-bullying. This led on well to refining the emotive and descriptive language they used to write a diary extract. Samples of work show that the most-able pupils are challenged well.
- Staff use questions particularly effectively to encourage pupils to identify what they think and know. Additional questions are also used well to demand more of pupils and to refine their ideas or explain their thinking. For example, Year 2 pupils were asked to explain their methods while counting in steps of three using a number stick, and why they started with the largest number when dividing.
- Staff have good subject knowledge, as seen in a phonics activity where younger pupils learned more about letters and the sounds they make. Here, the focus on the correct pronunciation of sounds from the back or front of their tongue helped pupils to understand that the letter 'c' can sound like 's' in 'cell' or differently in 'cat'.
- The school has developed an effective system for marking pupils' work in a systematic way. Their work shows that during the year this has become increasingly successful.
- The use of teaching assistants is effective. Most have a good understanding of what they are expected to do and work well with individuals and small groups of pupils. This has a positive impact on the progress made, including for disadvantaged pupils and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The small number of pupils speaking English as an additional language is also well supported and they become confident communicators.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the school with a range of early learning experiences and skills. Observations and the school's own records show that children make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The standards achieved by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 have often been above national averages but the progress they made, especially in Key Stage 2 in the last three years, was not consistently good. This was not initially acted on promptly enough by the school until it became more of a downwards trend. This has resulted in some gaps in pupils' learning which the school is now succeeding in closing.
- During this year, considerable changes have been made, particularly in the use of assessment information by teachers in planning. Pupils' work and discussions with them show that more is now expected of pupils. Current pupils' work clearly shows their rate of progress has improved. From their different starting points pupils now make good progress.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do particularly well in reading. Many have good phonic understanding, become fluent and confident readers and clearly enjoy reading for pleasure. In Year 1, more-able pupils made good progress in their comprehension when using part of a story about the Gruffalo to answer questions by referring to the text.
- The content of pupils' writing is often good. Many use a descriptive vocabulary across a range of subjects. However, in national tests and as seen in their work, spelling, punctuation and grammar are not consistently good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of numbers and of shapes, space and measures. Many are quite confident to use what they already know to solve mathematical problems. For example, lower-attaining older pupils measured parts of their partner's body accurately and used this to make scaled-down representations that were half, quarter or one fifth their body size.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress compared with other pupils nationally and achieve well. This is because teachers plan work which is well matched to their individual needs and different levels and types of support are provided according to their abilities.
- In 2014, this group of pupils considerably outperformed other pupils in the school in writing and mathematics, and their attainment was the same as their classmates in reading. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment in each subject was above that of other pupils nationally. While the 2015 results are, as yet, provisional, a similar picture appears. This indicates the school's success in closing any gaps in attainment.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Those speaking English as an additional language also make good progress. The help these pupils receive is well matched to their particular needs and supports both their personal and academic development. This enables them to grow in confidence and achieve well in relation to their different starting points and abilities.
- The most-able pupils also make good progress because the level of challenge provided for them in their

work is high. The provisional results of the 2015 national tests show that a greater proportion of pupils have achieved the highest possible level in writing and mathematics than in previous years.

- Pupils develop a healthy lifestyle through a range of physical education and sports activities. The school has employed external sports coaches to work with staff and pupils, which has led to increasing levels of confidence and skill, including in gymnastics. The impact of this expenditure is also seen in the wider range of after-school activities and increased success in sports competitions and events, such as cycling.

The early years provision

is good

- Discussion with staff indicates that, while the intake and experiences of the children are changing slightly, children enter school with skills that are typical for their age. Discussions and samples of work show that they settle quickly and make rapid progress in all areas of their learning and development. By the end of Reception, most are confident and chatty and have a good level of interest in the world around them. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The quality of children's work shows that teaching over time is consistently good. Children of all abilities achieve well. The range of activities is imaginative and good use is made of the outdoor area to provide lots of things to do and equipment that interest the children. For example, they say they love sitting in the tepee for discussions, and playing with train tracks and water chutes.
- Children make good progress in developing their understanding of one more or one less and are challenged well in using numbers to 30. More-able children then work out two more or less. Staff make particularly good use of questions to encourage children to explain how they have worked out their answers. This helps them develop their confidence in speaking to others and using mathematical vocabulary. Children also make good progress in using instructions to write how Rosie the chicken gets back to the farm using words about position including 'over', 'under' and 'around'.
- Children's behaviour is consistently good and they develop very positive attitudes to learning. Many are keen to be chosen to share their ideas and show their work to the class. When asked questions, they are responsive and enthusiastic. Children are kept safe and secure. Discussions with parents indicate their children feel safe and there is good sharing of information with staff.
- Leadership and management of the early years provision are good. Staff are enthusiastic in their approach and have worked very successfully to develop effective provision. Assessments of children's skills on entry are carefully considered but understate them. This is because the assessments do not take into account all of the skills and experiences the children have.

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	110417
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	449743

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Will Martel
Headteacher	Jenny Martin
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 March 2010
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