

# Benhall St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 124721            |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Suffolk           |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 340637            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 4-5 November 2009 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Keith Sadler      |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary   |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary controlled  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 4-9   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 45  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body  |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Cheryl Ward   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Chris Gallagher   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 24 May 2007   |
| <b>School address</b>                      | School Lane<br>Benhall<br>Saxmundham<br>Suffolk<br>IP17 1HE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01728 602407  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          |   |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | ht.benhallstmarys.p@talk21.com                              |

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|---------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4-9               |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 4-5 November 2009 |
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. He observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school's improvement plan and also pupils' work. In addition, the responses of 27 parents' questionnaires were analysed and their comments taken into account.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the extent of pupils' progress and whether the current Year 4 pupils are on track to meet their targets
- how well the needs of the more vulnerable pupils are met
- the key features of teaching that promote good learning
- the quality and use of assessment to support learning
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation procedures and how well teachers contribute to these.

## Information about the school

Benhall St Mary's is a very small school that serves the village of Benhall and surrounding villages. In addition, pupils attend from nearby towns. Pupils are taught in mixed year groups within two classes. All the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average though the numbers having statements is very high in comparison with the national average. Currently the Early Years Foundation Stage consists of six children who share a class with the Year 1 pupils. The Healthy Schools award has been gained.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Benhall St Mary's is a good school. It has some outstanding features including the care, guidance and support provided by all the adults in the school. This leads the pupils to feel very safe and secure. The exceptionally warm ethos of support enables pupils to thrive in their personal development. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils have highly positive attitudes to school, learning and each other and they thoroughly enjoy all the school has to offer. Parents appreciate what the school does for their children and are unanimous in their support. One parent's comments captured the views of all the parents when he wrote, 'The school is so welcoming and there are lovely touches that make the children feel like being a part of an extended family.'

Children enter the school with a wide range of skills that, overall, are similar to those expected of four-year-old children. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and this continues in Years 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4 and by the time they leave the school, their attainment is above the expected levels for their age, though it is higher in reading and mathematics than in writing. There has been a considerable increase in the number of pupils entering the school who have special educational needs. These pupils are supported exceptionally well, make excellent progress towards their learning goals, and thrive in their personal development. The pupils' good progress is the result of teaching that is consistently good and often outstanding with teachers and their assistants ensuring that the particularly wide range of abilities in the mixed-age classes are fully addressed. This is aided in literacy by the effective strategy of teaching all the pupils in very small groups using a highly structured approach to the subject. The focused teaching of early reading skills has had a very positive impact on pupils' attainment in reading. In writing, the school is keenly aware of the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces and to ensure that writing tasks are consistently linked to other subjects being taught. The curriculum is of good quality and is enriched by a wide range of additional activities. Although the curriculum is more interesting and creative than at the time of the previous inspection, the school has rightly embarked on a priority to ensure that subjects are linked together more consistently and to develop a curriculum which ensures progression in the development of skills. The aim of this is to make learning more meaningful for pupils.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He is much admired by the pupils, staff, parents and governors and has been pivotal to the school's improvement. He has established robust and accurate systems for monitoring and evaluating the

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school's performance and the two other teachers and governors are directly involved in this. This rigour enables the school to develop a good quality improvement plan which is a useful tool for supporting a further rise in attainment. There is a deep commitment to build on the existing strengths and to speed progress. The good improvements made since the previous inspection demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Develop the curriculum from its current good level by linking subjects together and developing a clear structure to support pupils' progress in the development of their skills.
- Accelerate progress in pupils' writing by:
  - providing more opportunities for extended writing
  - embedding the recently introduced structured programme for the teaching of writing.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**1**

Pupils achieve well, enjoy learning and make good progress. The rate of their progress has accelerated in the past year and, as a consequence, attainment has risen. Provisional results in the national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 show standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels has increased. Current Year 2 pupils are on track to continue these above average standards. Progress is good, and is quickening in Years 3 and 4. Both inspection findings and the school's records of progress show that a higher proportion of pupils than in the past is exceeding the national expectation for pupils at the end of Year 4. There has been a particular strengthening of progress in reading and there are indications that the new approach to teaching writing is also having a positive impact. Pupils say that they enjoy writing and the most able achieve well because they receive outstanding teaching. Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities are catered for exceptionally well. They benefit from frequent skilled support from the large team of teaching assistants. They make excellent progress and are fully included in all activities.

Pupils thrive in their personal development. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. By the time they reach Year 4, pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and are secure learners who have well-developed social skills. As one pupil said, 'Our teachers help us all to be confident and they say that we are doing well so I like my school and all my friends.' Pupils have an excellent appreciation of cultural diversity because of the plethora of links that the school has with other countries as well as its close ties with a multi-ethnic school in Ipswich; the pupils enjoy both visiting and receiving visits from this school. Pupils have strong and definite views about conducting a healthy lifestyle and readily point to the healthy meals and the 'wake and shake' sessions, as well as the many

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opportunities for physical exercise provided for them both as part of the curriculum and also in the popular after-school clubs. Pupils' highly developed care and support for each other in school, for example by being members of the extremely influential school council, are features of the good contribution they make to the community in school.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>   | 2        |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress  | 2        |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress                      | 1        |
| <b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>Pupils' behaviour</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:  |          |
| Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>   | 2        |
| <b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>  | <b>1</b> |

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers ensure that a wide range of activities and tasks are geared well to the various needs of the pupils with differing abilities and ages so pupils thoroughly enjoy learning. Both classrooms present a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils collaborate very well, delight in showing visitors the many high quality displays, and respond very positively to the good quality questioning that characterises the teachers' interventions and support in learning. The flexible grouping systems in literacy and numeracy that enables pupils to be moved between groups regardless of age, helps to ensure that there is a good match of work to their needs. However, the effectiveness of the teaching of literacy is limited by the lack of opportunity that teachers provide for pupils to write extended pieces. In addition, teachers do not always take the opportunity to link their literacy work with other subjects. All the pupils are exceptionally well known to the staff and there are excellent and frequent links with parents. The school is especially effective in its care, guidance and support of potentially vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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disabilities. It works very effectively with families and other professionals to ensure that these pupils' needs are met. Teachers use assessments well. They are effective in assessing learning, helping the pupils to be clear about what it is they are learning and providing feedback on how they can improve. These key features of learning engender the pupils' good progress.

The school's curriculum is of good quality. Frequent visits, visitors and special events such as the planned life skills week to be held in the week following the inspection make learning interesting. There has been a marked improvement in the use of computers since the previous inspection and the curriculum for information and communication technology is a strength of the school. In addition, pupils thoroughly enjoy art and produce work of high quality. There is a very strong emphasis on developing global understanding and the school has close links with many schools in Europe as a result of a collaborative programme to produce a film.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The quality of teaching</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| The use of assessment to support learning  | 2        |
| <b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>   | <b>1</b> |

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides very clear and highly effective leadership and balances professional rigour with care and compassion, ensuring a clear focus on both academic progress and the personal development of all pupils. He has built on the good procedures found at the previous inspection to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision and standards and, as a result, has developed an accurate picture of the school's position. This information is used well to support good quality improvement planning. The plan is underpinned by a clear vision for the future improvement of the school. This has been developed after consultation with all the staff, parents and pupils. The headteacher ensures that the teaching staff are directly involved in all aspects of monitoring and evaluation and, because there are clear and purposeful training programmes available to all, teaching assistants also play an important role. As a result, teamwork is strong and staff morale high. Governance is good with the newly appointed chair of governors ensuring that statutory responsibilities are met in full and that the governing body provides a good balance between support and challenge. Equal opportunities are promoted well and discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils' health and safety are paramount and all safeguarding requirements are met in full. There is a strong sense of community cohesion within the school and close links are established with the village and wider community, and particularly strong links have been established with schools across

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Europe and also in Africa and Australia.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| Taking into account:<br>The leadership and management of teaching and learning   | 1        |
| <b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b> | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>  | <b>2</b> |

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision is good and the staff work closely together as a team. Children are happy because their welfare is a priority and they enjoy the learning activities planned for them. Children's attainment on entry varies each year. Currently most have the skills and knowledge expected for their age. Many parents commented on how quickly and well their children settle into routines because of the school's excellent care and well organised induction procedures. They make good progress in all areas of learning and are well prepared to meet the challenges of the curriculum by the time they begin Year 1. Curriculum planning is good with an excellent balance being established between activities directed by the key workers and those that the children choose for themselves. The recent upgrading of the outdoor area has had a particularly beneficial effect. This now provides an excellent outdoor space which has been carefully and creatively designed to enable children to learn and play happily. The plans to provide a cover are well founded as this will enable the space to be used during inclement and hot weather. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are excellent and the leader has developed provision, teaching and learning, and assessment exceptionally well in the two years she has been in post. Teamwork is very close. Teaching assistants are highly skilled in supporting learning and managing the behaviour of those children that have particular behavioural needs. Assessments are of high quality and all the staff contribute very well to the excellent 'learning journals' that provide a comprehensive and well-founded picture of children's development across each area of learning.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>                   | <b>2</b> |
| Taking into account:   |          |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage                          | 2        |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage                       | 2        |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 1        |

## Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of families returned the questionnaire. Parents' and carers' views are exceptionally and highly positive with parents being unanimous in their support of the school in almost all respects. Many parents commented on the positive, lively, inclusive atmosphere of the school and its close 'family' feel. Inspection findings confirm these views.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered Benhall St Mary's Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 27 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 45 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements  | Strongly agree |    | Agree |    | Disagree |   | Strongly disagree |   |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
|   | Total          | %  | Total | %  | Total    | % | Total             | % |
| My child enjoys school  | 21             | 81 | 5     | 19 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe  | 20             | 77 | 6     | 23 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress   | 20             | 77 | 6     | 23 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school   | 17             | 65 | 8     | 31 | 1        | 4 | 0                 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school   | 16             | 62 | 10    | 38 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning  | 18             | 69 | 8     | 31 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle   | 20             | 77 | 6     | 23 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 15             | 58 | 11    | 42 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs  | 15             | 58 | 11    | 42 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour  | 16             | 62 | 8     | 31 | 1        | 4 | 1                 | 4 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns   | 14             | 54 | 12    | 46 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively   | 20             | 77 | 6     | 23 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school   | 21             | 81 | 5     | 19 | 0        | 0 | 0                 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement    | Description  |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding  | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.  |
| Grade 2 | Good         | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.  |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.  |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate   | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school       | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) |      |              |            |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
|                      | Outstanding   | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools      | 39  | 58   | 3            | 0          |
| Primary schools      | 13  | 50   | 33           | 4          |
| Secondary schools    | 17  | 40   | 34           | 9          |
| Sixth forms          | 18  | 43   | 37           | 2          |
| Special schools      | 26  | 54   | 18           | 2          |
| Pupil referral units | 7   | 55   | 30           | 7          |
| All schools          | 15  | 49   | 32           | 5          |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.  |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.  |
| Learning:                  | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.  |
| Overall effectiveness:     | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul> |
| Progress:                  | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.   |

10 November 2009



Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Benhall St Mary's Primary School, Saxmundham IP17 1HE**

I really enjoyed meeting with you and listening to what you had to say about your school. I enjoyed listening to all your positive comments about your school and I was particularly impressed by the talking displays that the older pupils showed me throughout the school!

Yours is a good school and this letter is to tell you what we found when we visited.

- I can understand why both you and your parents told me that you love school and learning because all the adults look after you exceptionally well and make sure that you are happy and safe and that you thoroughly enjoy your time at school.
- Your headteacher is doing an excellent job and together with the staff he makes sure that your school runs smoothly and well.
- You work hard, behave outstandingly well, and your teachers make sure that you make good progress by making lessons interesting. Teachers also make sure that there is a good range of things for you to do both in lessons and in the many clubs that you enjoy.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy. You told me about what you like to eat and the sports you like to play.

Even in such a good school like yours, there are things which could be improved. I have asked that your teachers make sure that you make even better progress in writing. I have asked them to make sure that your new writing programme, 'Read, write, inc' continues to be taught. I have also asked your teachers to give you more chances to write longer pieces of writing. Finally, I have asked your headteacher and teachers to make sure that the curriculum is planned by linking more subjects together and making it gradually more difficult as you get older.

I hope that you will all keep on working hard and enjoy your time at school.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler  
Lead Inspector

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