

Boughton-under-Blean Methodist Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118705
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313054
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Garner
Headteacher	Hugh Greenwood
Date of previous school inspection	21 June 2004
School address	School Lane Boughton-under-Blean Faversham ME13 9AW
Telephone number	01227 751431
Fax number	01227 752546

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is an average sized primary school initially set up by the Methodist church. Most pupils are White British. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and few pupils speak English as an additional language. A lower than average percentage of pupils receive free school meals. A slightly above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average overall.

The school recently formed a federation with another local school. At the beginning of the autumn term 2007 all of the 28 pupils from this other school moved to the Boughton site. A full amalgamation of the two schools is planned for the spring term 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Boughton-under-Blean Methodist Primary School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is an improving school which already has a number of good features. The pupils' personal development and well-being, including their behaviour, are good. Pupils are happy in lessons and enjoy coming to school. They are well cared for and well supported. Effective systems of intervention and support enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage.

The school has successfully surmounted a number of challenges and has made improvements. The move towards a federation, the assimilation of all the pupils from another local school this term, the disruption caused by the modernisation of the school premises and a high staff turnover have all been well managed. Because of the drive, vision and good leadership of the headteacher, some areas of underachievement have been tackled successfully and staff morale has remained buoyant. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils are beginning to progress at a faster rate. Teaching is satisfactory overall. As a result, the school enables its pupils to make satisfactory progress and to achieve average standards. Actions put in place have not yet been sufficiently successful in accelerating the pupils' progress so that they achieve higher standards. Although achievement is now satisfactory, there are still some shortcomings in standards. Too few pupils reach the higher levels for their age by the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 2, there are shortcomings in the performance of the more capable pupils, in particular in writing.

The majority of teachers are new to the school this term and show the potential to enable the pupils to make more rapid progress and to attain higher standards. It is clear that if pupils are to do better, teachers' expectations of them need to be consistently high enough so that they are all challenged to do as well as they should. This is particularly the case in writing in the infant part of the school. The curriculum is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has satisfactorily addressed most of the issues identified in the last inspection report, but aspects of marking have been slow to improve. Marking is still not used sufficiently well to provide all pupils with good guidance on what they need to do to improve their performance. The school has a good capacity for making further gains as is shown by the impact of its actions so far, its future plans and the strong commitment to raising standards. Most parents are positive about what the school provides for their children. However, a significant minority raised concerns about the quality of communication with the school and the amount of information they receive about current changes and developments in the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school has tackled weaknesses identified in the last inspection report and the provision in the Foundation Stage is now good. The Foundation Stage leader works closely with the capable teaching assistants to plan activities which meet the children's needs. Teaching is effective and all staff are clear about how to monitor and record the children's progress. Parents of the children who have just started in the Reception class are very pleased with how well the staff settled the children into their new surroundings. Children are already playing together, becoming familiar with the classroom routines and are making good progress in, for example, recognising their name in print.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help more pupils to reach the higher levels for their age in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 and particularly in writing by the end of Year 2.
- Ensure that all teachers have high expectations and provide all pupils with the right level of challenge.
- Ensure marking provides pupils with good guidance on what they need to do to improve their performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall achievement is satisfactory. The school is aware that over recent years standards have been too variable and that test results have sometimes been below the national average at the end of Year 2. Standards are now improving and are average in Year 2, and the pupils are making satisfactory progress through Years 1 and 2. Even so, it continues to be the case that not enough pupils reach the higher levels at this age especially in writing.

Test results at the end of Year 6 remain broadly average. There is a rising trend in the number of pupils gaining the expected levels for their age, although there is less consistent improvement in the number reaching the higher levels. Last year the school did not meet its own targets in English, mathematics and science. Improved planning and better teaching are beginning to have an impact and pupils are catching up in areas in which they have fallen behind in the past. All pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' personal development and well-being are good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The social and moral aspects of pupils' development are particularly strong. Their understanding of modern multicultural society is a relatively less well developed area. As pupils progress through the school they develop into mature and articulate young people. Their relationships with adults and their peers are a strength of the school as a result of the mutual respect shown by all members of the school community. Behaviour is good and pupils respond well to the high expectations of adults. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with national attendance rates.

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy the varied programme of enrichment activities, such as clubs and visits out. They have a good understanding of how to achieve a healthy lifestyle and value the opportunities to drink water throughout the day, eat healthy snacks and take regular exercise. Pupils make satisfactory contributions to the community by, for example, raising funds for charities. Members of the school council are keen to improve school life but the council is not yet an effective means through which all pupils can contribute. Building work has resulted in a cramped playground but the pupils play sensibly and have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe. The pupils' economic well-being is enhanced by their skills in working collaboratively, links with the world of work and their improving skills in numeracy and literacy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Over time, the teaching in the school has enabled the pupils to make the expected progress in their learning but has not resulted in pupils achieving consistently high standards. The school recognises that if standards are to be raised and more pupils are to reach the higher levels for their age all teachers need to have high enough expectations and to challenge all pupils, particularly the more capable ones.

Lesson observations during the inspection reveal that much teaching is now good. In the most effective lessons, there is a good rapport between the teachers and the pupils, lessons move at a brisk pace and it is clear to the pupils what they are expected to learn. Teachers display good subject expertise and deploy teaching assistants effectively. The motivated and attentive pupils sustain their concentration over time and behave well in lessons. Where teaching is only satisfactory the pace of the lessons is slower, which reduces the rate of the learning and work is not regularly pitched to challenge more able pupils. In these lessons, the teachers do not monitor the whole class carefully enough to ensure all pupils remain on task.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers plan a good range of interesting activities which have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Visits enhance learning well. For example, on a visit to a war museum staff and pupils dressed in 1940's clothing and carried gas masks which helped to bring history to life for the pupils. Pupils' personal development is enriched by participating in productions, extra-curricular activities and residential trips. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is good and now includes full coverage of all the recommended areas of learning.

The school recognises the need to better develop pupils' understanding of different cultures and has planned a multicultural week. Although the school has drawn up plans of what will be taught for subjects such as personal, social and health education and music, detailed timetables of when these are going to be taught are not yet in place.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good overall. The school is rightly proud of its work in promoting pupils' personal welfare. Good induction procedures for Reception children help them settle in quickly. Staff, and in particular the family liaison officer, provide effective support to vulnerable pupils and their families. Pupils are confident to turn to adults if they are worried or upset and say that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Staff have received relevant training in child protection and procedures to safeguard pupils meet current government requirements. Staff pay due attention to pupils' health and safety. The school is working hard to raise attendance levels by deterring parents from taking their children on holiday during term time. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Staff identify these pupils' needs well, provide appropriate programmes to support them and track their progress carefully.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Teachers set individual targets, but there are inconsistencies in the way achievement is checked against these targets so pupils do not always know how well they are doing. In particular, marking does not often inform pupils well enough about how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A new senior leadership team is well poised to take the school to the next stage. With leadership responsibilities now distributed more widely, staff are increasingly accountable for the areas for which they carry responsibilities. The school's leaders know what needs to be better, what action is required and recent improvements indicate a good capacity to achieve the desired ends. The determined efforts of the headteacher have ensured that the monitoring of teaching has been rigorous and that weaker teaching has been eliminated. Teaching and learning are improving and pupils are beginning to benefit as a result although the school recognises that more needs to be done. Whole-school improvement plans are in place and act as useful tools to bring about change.

The school evaluates its work accurately in some respects but school leaders have too favourable a view of the impact of their actions on the pupils' performance. The analysis of test data does not focus sufficiently on the impact of actions, the extent of pupils' progress or the standards achieved in relation to national expectations. Governance is satisfactory and the governors are becoming more active in holding the school to account and have been effective in supporting the creation of the federation.

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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?	3
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Boughton-under-Blean Methodist Primary School, Faversham, ME13 9AW

I am writing to you following the inspectors' recent visit to your school to let you know what we found out about your school. Thank you for your help in talking with us about your work and telling us what you think about the school.

We think your school provides you with a satisfactory education and that it is good in a number of ways. Everyone in your school takes good care of you and you get on well with each other. We know you enjoy coming to school. You told us that you feel safe and that there is always someone to talk to if you have a problem. The school provides you with a broad range of subjects to learn and different out-of-school activities. Teachers make lessons interesting. You show enthusiasm and work hard in lessons and behave well. Your parents are generally happy with the school and what it provides for you but want better contact with the school and more information about what is going on. Your headteacher, along with the other adults, is working hard to make the school even better for you. You can play your part by trying always to do your best.

We have asked the school to:

- help more of you to reach higher levels in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 and particularly in writing in the infant part of the school
- make sure that teachers challenge you all to do as well as you can
- make sure that the marking in your books gives you good guidance on what you need to do to improve your work. Thank you once again for your help.

Best wishes

Ian Hartland Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ian Hartland
Her Majesty's Inspector