

Inspection of Barcombe Church of England Primary School

Barcombe Cross, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5DN

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2015.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is 'a small and mighty school where everyone flourishes in the heart of the community'. Being kind is important. Pupils nominate each other for acts of kindness, which are proudly displayed on the school's 'kindness rainbow'. Pupils understand the significance of the school's values, such as perseverance, compassion and courage. These virtues reflect the school's high expectations and ensure that all pupils feel safe and cared for.

Pupils work hard. They focus and show interest and resilience in their learning. They value their education and attend school regularly. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in class and during breaktimes. They are polite and highly respectful to each other and staff. During social times, older pupils play alongside younger pupils, modelling turn-taking and teamwork.

The school helps pupils to be confident and accomplished leaders. Roles such as librarians, 'digital leaders' and 'worship wardens' help pupils learn about responsibility. Pupils are proud to represent their school. They are encouraged to have a voice. The school listens and is proactive in implementing pupils' ideas. For example, the school council is currently working on a federation project to write a 'Barcombe recipe book'.

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

School leaders share an unwavering sense of commitment and determination to ensure that everything is done in the best interests of children. As a result, pupils are happy and achieve well. Staff feel supported by the school and the federation, particularly in curriculum design and in their well-being and workload.

Children get off to a strong start in the early years. There is a sharp focus on developing their language and communication skills. Staff interact with children effectively, modelling language for children to practise as they play together. Written signs throughout the learning environment help children to recognise important vocabulary in print.

The school's curriculum is ambitious. Careful consideration has been given to how it meets the needs of mixed-age classes. Oracy and vocabulary development are strengths. Teachers model vocabulary clearly, which pupils then use accurately in their learning. Teachers ask skilful questions to check and probe pupils' understanding. This helps teachers correct misconceptions and embed pupils' knowledge and skills.

The school prioritises reading. Knowledgeable staff teach the phonics programme effectively. Teachers regularly check that pupils are keeping up. If pupils are at risk of falling behind, extra support is quickly put in place. This helps those pupils catch up. Pupils read books that include the sounds that they have been taught in phonics. This helps them practise the sounds they know and quickly become fluent, confident readers.

Historically, pupils' learning in some subjects was not as secure as the school intends. This has resulted in pupils having some gaps in their prior knowledge, which makes it more

difficult for them to learn new content. For example, some pupils struggle to remember key number facts. This hinders them when solving mathematical problems that involve multiplication. Some pupils have misconceptions in their writing, such as poor spelling, punctuation and handwriting. These issues slow some pupils' learning, which means that they do not learn as deeply or securely as they could. The school has rightly identified these aspects and is tackling them. As a result, pupils' recall of key knowledge in these subjects is improving.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Pupils' individual needs are quickly and accurately identified. Staff skilfully adapt their teaching to provide bespoke support for pupils. This ensures that pupils with SEND access the curriculum and participate fully in school life.

Pupils' behaviour is exceptional. They are respectful and well mannered. School rules and expectations are consistently applied by staff. Pupils follow these without question because a culture of very positive behaviour is embedded throughout the school.

The school provides an extensive personal development offer for pupils. Over time, pupils develop positive values, such as responsibility, forgiveness and hope. These values inform and guide pupils' motivation and attitudes. Personal development provision fits carefully within the rest of the school's curriculum. As a result, pupils have access to a rich set of opportunities as they move through the school. These opportunities, including extra-curricular opportunities, strengthen the school's offer significantly. For example, pupils visit Glyndbourne Opera House and Lewes Castle, while others recreate the Battle of Hastings. Other regular opportunities include a carefully designed outdoor curriculum for every year group, where children develop talents and interests and build strength of character from Reception onwards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to develop and secure the core foundations of writing. Handwriting, spelling and punctuation errors are not routinely identified and addressed. As a result, some pupils find it difficult to write accurately, which slows their progress. The school should ensure that the staff have the knowledge to develop pupils' foundational knowledge in writing fully effectively.
- The school has not addressed gaps and misconceptions in some pupils' foundational mathematical knowledge. This means that some pupils struggle to apply their understanding of multiplication to different situations. The school should ensure that these historical gaps in some pupils' knowledge are addressed effectively.

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

Unique reference number	114488
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10341328
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	125
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Clark
Executive headteacher	Stewart James
Website	www.barcombe.e-sussex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 June 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Barcombe Church of England Primary School is a voluntary-controlled school in the Diocese of Chichester. As such, it is subject to an inspection of denominational education under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in April 2024.
- The school is part of the Skylark Federation. The Skylark Federation has a total of four schools.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum, spoke to pupils and sampled pupils' work in history. Inspectors sampled pupils' writing.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss aspects of the school's work, including behaviour, attendance, personal development and provision for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.
- The lead inspector met with members of the federation's governing body.
- Inspectors considered pupils' views during meetings with them and talked to pupils when visiting lessons and at other times of day, such as lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector spoke with some parents on the morning of the first day of the inspection.
- Staff's views were considered during discussions with them and through their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.

Inspection team

Luisa Gould, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Matt Batchelor

Ofsted Inspector

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