

Kennet Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109898
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	378007
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2012
Lead inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Clay
Headteacher	Kathryn Cockar
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

George Logan

Additional inspector

Barbara Atcheson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors spent six hours and 40 minutes observing teaching and learning in 14 lessons taught by seven different members of staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, and with staff and two groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading and looked at the documentation including records of the monitoring of teaching, the main school improvement plan, records relating to safeguarding and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken. The inspectors analysed 56 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with 20 questionnaires from staff and 92 from pupils.

Information about the school

Kennet Valley Primary School is average in size compared with similar schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small number of pupils come from the Traveller community. Only a few pupils speak English as an additional language and none of these is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those supported by school action plus and with statements of special educational needs, is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school has gained a number of awards, including the Active Mark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark and has achieved Healthy School status. The school offers a breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body. There is also an after-school club which is managed by outside providers and is registered and inspected separately. There have been a significant number of staff changes in recent years.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Since the last inspection, increased stability in staffing, together with organisational changes, is driving rapid improvement. Overall effectiveness is not good because teaching and achievement are not yet consistently good. Schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children achieve well in Reception. They make steady progress in Years 1 and 2, so that attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 2. Progress in Years 3 to 6 has, typically, been erratic, with a rapid acceleration in Year 6, but is now more consistent. For some pupils, progress is good, although slower across the year groups in mathematics than in reading or writing. Attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is satisfactory, with some good teaching observed. Increased staff stability, effective professional development and more rigorous monitoring are contributing to higher expectations of pupils' achievement. Many aspects of assessment have improved. However, marking is often superficial, providing little guidance for pupils. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the presentation of pupils' written work.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' personal development are good. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. Provision for pupils' welfare, including for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is good and pupils mostly feel safe. There are few recorded incidents of poor behaviour. Attendance is above average.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team are providing an increasingly focused approach to school improvement. As a result, teaching has improved recently and standards are rising. The management of performance and the evaluation of pupils' progress and outcomes are satisfactory. The revised

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curriculum is good and is supporting improved achievement. Governors make a satisfactory contribution to leadership and management. There is a lack of rigour in some aspects of the management of health and safety.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon recent initiatives to improve the consistency of pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics by:
 - implementing a whole-school calculation policy
 - continuing to develop opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge across the curriculum
 - ensuring that lessons provide an appropriate level of challenge for the full range of pupils.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by ensuring that teachers adopt a consistent approach to:
 - more thorough and developmental marking of pupils' work
 - setting higher expectations of the quality of presentation of pupils' written work.
- Ensure that lines of accountability in relation to health and safety matters are clearly defined and that all records are fully maintained and readily accessible.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. As a result of recent actions to improve teaching and learning, it is improving steadily – a view shared by parents and carers. As a consequence of some weaker teaching across the school in 2011, achievement was inconsistent, although satisfactory overall, leading to broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6. However, tracking data and evidence from pupils' work suggest that performance is likely to be stronger in 2012. Some pupils, particularly in the upper years, are currently making good progress, although some unevenness remains.

Overall, children's skills on entry to Reception are below age-related expectations. However, their skills are well below expectations in reading, writing and calculation. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of accurate assessment and effective teaching. Outcomes by the end of Reception are around the expected level, although reading and writing are usually less strong than the other elements. Attainment by the end of Year 2, including in reading, is broadly average. Following a dip and some underperformance in 2011, attainment is on track to recover and rise to broadly average in 2012. There has been a recent successful focus on improving writing skills and embedding reading skills through regular reinforcement of pupils' phonic knowledge (the linking of sounds and letters).

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Nevertheless, pupils' written work is not always neatly presented.

Progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory, supporting broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6. Expectations are highest and progress most rapid in Year 6, but with increasing consistency in the quality of teaching, progress is improving across the school. The impact of the school's successful strategy for teaching reading is evident in Year 6 where attainment in reading is now above average. Progress in mathematics has not improved as rapidly as in the other subjects and remains inconsistent across the school. There is no whole-school calculation policy to provide a clear, consistently-applied framework for teaching and learning. Pupils are often enthusiastic about their learning. Where teaching strongly engages pupils, as in a phonics lesson in Year 2, in a successful Year 4 mathematics session on practical problem solving, and in most lessons in Year 6, pupils' learning accelerates rapidly. Pupils work together cooperatively when the opportunity arises. Higher attaining pupils are particularly challenged in Year 6 lessons. Overall, more rigorous tracking and a greater focus on pupils' learning are having a positive impact on progress. Well-planned provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures that they make at least satisfactory progress. The few Traveller pupils make mostly satisfactory progress in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Quality of teaching

Parents, carers and pupils feel that teaching is generally good. Although several good lessons were observed, mainly in Reception and Years 3 to 6, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. In recent years, the school has experienced relatively high levels of staff mobility. This has affected the continuity of learning and has made it difficult to sustain new initiatives. As a result, the impact of teaching over time has been variable, leading to inconsistencies in pupils' progress. However, greater stability in staffing and recent high-quality training, together with focused coaching and mentoring, have had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. This is enabling more pupils, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, to make accelerated progress.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development satisfactorily. They provide good opportunities for independent learning, for example in the use of mathematics trails, although there are too few opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to engage in practical science activities. An example of good teaching was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, where pupils made good progress because the tasks, relating to a theme park development, were relevant and interesting and allowed pupils to draw on a range of skills. The teacher had high expectations and engaged pupils' enthusiasm well. In other mathematics lessons, the challenge is not so evident and, as a result, the pace of learning is slower. Where teaching assistants are proactive and resourceful, as in Years 1 and 2, they have a positive impact upon learning. Teaching assistants who support pupils with statements of special educational needs are consistently effective.

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Progress in implementing some assessment strategies, including self-assessment by pupils, has been generally good. Pupils have a range of individual targets, although the management of these targets, and the recording of pupils' successes, varies between classes. The marking of pupils' work is often superficial, with little indication of the appropriate next steps. Some unmarked work was seen. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' written work vary significantly between classes.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour and safety are good. Parents, carers and pupils are mostly positive about behaviour although a small minority have some concerns about the school's approach to bullying. Overall, however, pupils' positive behaviour and generally good engagement in lessons contribute to a safe and orderly school environment. There is a positive community spirit. In lessons, pupils usually respond promptly to teachers' directions and work cooperatively with each other. The school's behaviour management procedures are clear and usually applied consistently, and pupils are well aware of these strategies. They try hard to respond and improvements over time are evident for individuals and groups. There are few recorded behavioural incidents of any significance. There have been no exclusions in the current year.

Most pupils say that they feel safe and most parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school. Instances of bullying, including, for example, cyber-bullying or bullying related to race or sexual orientation, are infrequent. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and have a good understanding of risk, supported by the school's input on rail safety and personal safety. Pupils understand the need to stay safe when using the internet. Attendance is above average. Pupils arrive at school punctually.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team, with delegated responsibilities, has facilitated significant improvements. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated. The school has implemented consistent, whole-school approaches to areas such as extended writing. As a result, learning is accelerating, although leaders recognise that there is further work to do. Most issues from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled.

More rigorous analysis of data is enabling leaders to identify inconsistencies in learning and progress. School self-evaluation correctly recognises the school's main priorities for development and the broad trend of improvement. Senior staff in their recently assigned roles are already making an impact. Subject leaders are now having a tangible impact on teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching and learning has become more effective, with successful use of coaching and modelling strategies. An increasingly effective programme of staff development ensures that all staff are better prepared to meet the range of pupils' needs. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum. Evidence shows that the school has the capacity for further improvement.

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Parents and carers rightly feel that school leaders and staff effectively promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils are cared for consistently well, both during the school day and in the well-managed breakfast club. The school actively tackles discrimination and is committed to promoting equality. It monitors closely the arrangements for the support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The provision made to support Traveller pupils, relatively new to the school, is generally good.

The school satisfactorily promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Of these, social development is a strength. While there is some support for cultural development, pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is relatively limited. The revised curriculum is good. Literacy skills are well promoted across the curriculum. Science is taught with some rigour. Good use is made of the rich and attractive school grounds. Opportunities to support able and gifted pupils have been developed through the local 'family' of schools.

The governing body effectively supports the day-to-day management of school affairs, particularly premises and finance. Governors' engagement with the detail of the school's academic performance is not quite as consistent. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and are generally effective. Security arrangements are good. However, there are shortcomings in the documenting of some aspects of health and safety practice. Lines of accountability relating to health and safety are not clearly defined and records are not always fully maintained or readily accessible.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

28 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Kennet Valley Primary School, Reading, RG31 7YT

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, joining you in lessons and hearing your views. Thank you to those who completed our questionnaire. We found that while Kennet Valley is a satisfactory school, it is now making some rapid improvements.

- Overall, you make satisfactory progress. However, you are now beginning to learn much more rapidly and consistently. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average.
- The school provides well for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those from a Traveller background.
- Teaching is satisfactory. However, you learn increasingly well in many lessons. Marking does not always give you clear guidance on how to improve your work. The quality of your written work is not always good enough.
- You show good attitudes to learning. You feel, and records confirm, that behaviour overall is good. Attendance is above average.
- Senior leaders have driven through several positive changes recently and recognise what remains to be done.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- help you to make better progress and reach higher standards in mathematics
- improve the quality of teachers' marking and make sure that staff have higher expectations of your written work
- ensure that health and safety procedures are managed and recorded effectively.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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