

Mark Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School

The Causeway, Highbridge, Somerset, TA9 4QA

Inspection dates 11–12 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Nearly all pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, leading to attainment levels that are above expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 4.
- Learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is often vibrant and exciting.
- The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have very positive attitudes to school, attend regularly and their social skills are exceptionally well developed.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that there is no bullying. Pupils understand how to keep safe. They know a great deal about internet safety
- The school is well led and managed and there is a shared desire and commitment from leaders, governors and staff to make the school even better.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' handwriting skills are not consistently good in all classes. Quite a few pupils do not form letters correctly.
- Expectations as to how pupils present their work are not high enough. The presentation of some work in a number of subjects, such as English, mathematics, history and religious education, is untidy.
- On a few occasions, time is lost in lessons because classrooms are not organised to best effect to maximise pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and members of the school management team.
- The inspector also took account of the 38 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. He also spoke to a number of parents and carers during the inspection. The staff submitted 12 questionnaires, which were taken into account.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documents, and evidence about behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Stephen Dennett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a few from mixed backgrounds and other ethnic groups.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- Around 3% of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is well below the average for most primary schools.
- The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported on school action is broadly average. The proportion of pupils supported on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Three new staff have been appointed since September 2012, including one newly qualified teacher. The headteacher was also appointed from September 2012, after being acting headteacher of the school from September 2010.
- The governing body manages a breakfast and after-school club on the school site.
- Pupils move on to the local middle school at the end of Year 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the brisk, effective pace observed in many lessons is consistent across the school by:
 - reviewing and adjusting the organisation of classrooms so that pupils can move quickly and safely around the room
 - ensuring that teachers manage pupils' movement well when they are moving between activities so that no learning time is lost.
- Improve pupils' writing skills throughout the school as quickly as possible by:
 - all teachers ensuring that pupils' handwriting is neat, legible and correctly formed in all subjects
 - placing greater emphasis and expectations on pupils producing a high quality of presentation in their work in all subjects

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school in Reception with skills that are below those expected for their age. All groups achieve well and at times better because the curriculum is planned effectively and provides interesting and exciting activities that help children learn quickly. As a result, children reach at least the expected levels by the time they enter Year 1. A minority do better than this.
- Relationships in Reception are excellent and all adults have high expectations of what the children can achieve. For example, in a lesson about numbers, many children identified different shapes and were encouraged to use correct mathematical words, such as 'corner' and 'side'.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, standards have improved and are now above average. All groups of pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has increased in reading and mathematics, indicating that more-able pupils achieve well.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress and, by the end of Year 4, standards are above those expected, especially in mathematics. They are skilful in solving mathematical problems. For example, they use their knowledge of place value well to work out multiples of ten and multiply two-figure numbers by other two-figure numbers competently.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities make good progress in reading and read widely. Reading is promoted well and features prominently in all areas of the school. Pupils say they enjoy reading and can discuss and give opinions about what they have read.
- Although the content of pupils' writing is good and they make use of a wide range of vocabulary, their handwriting is not as good as it should be. A minority of younger pupils do not form letters correctly and only a few older pupils write using a clear and cursive script.
- The presentation of pupils' work is at times untidy because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Although a new handwriting scheme is in place, this has not had time to improve the way pupils present their work.
- The school has been successful in closing the gaps in learning between boys and girls by introducing a good range of topics planned specifically to engage boys in learning. There is now no difference in the performance of boys and girls in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding make good progress, especially in reading. The money is used effectively to provide a range of support, such as the use of additional adults in lessons, to improve literacy and numeracy skills.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress due to the good use of additional adult support they receive in lessons. The work they are given is very well suited to their needs.
- The small number of pupils from other minority ethnic heritages, and the very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language, make similar progress to that of their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- As a result of the action taken to improve teaching, teaching is now consistently good throughout the school, with examples of outstanding teaching, particularly in Reception and Key Stage 1.
- Strong relationships between all staff and pupils help create a very positive learning environment, which makes sure that pupils enjoy and take a full part in lessons. There are high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour.
- Teachers plan learning that matches the differing abilities of the pupils effectively. This was seen, particularly, in a very well-planned lesson in Year 2, where pupils made excellent progress in identifying missing numbers because the task they were given was matched to their abilities.
- Although very effective use is made of time in nearly all lessons, there are a few occasions when

the pace of the lesson slows because of disruption caused by pupils moving from one task to another. This is in part due to the way in which the furniture in the Year 1 and Year 3 classrooms is planned and organised, so that pupils and adults have difficulty moving around quickly and safely. In addition, teachers do not always manage the changeover in the most effective way to ensure that no learning time is lost.

- Teaching assistants and other adults are used well to support and improve pupils' learning. They add significantly to the progress pupils make by asking questions that make pupils think. They are good role models and provide valuable support in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs.
- Teachers check up on learning in lessons and pick up mistakes as they happen. Books are marked regularly and the recently introduced marking system is used consistently well. Written comments inform pupils how they can improve their work and what they need to do to achieve their learning targets.
- Writing skills are taught well in terms of the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation pupils are expected to use. However, this is not always matched by clear expectations as to the quality of handwriting and presentation the pupils should be aspiring to.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported exceptionally well. For instance, in a school assembly that was used to teach pupils a number of hymns and songs, pupils listened carefully, behaved exceptionally well and sang songs and hymns with high levels of energy and in two parts.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They concentrate exceptionally well and nearly all try really hard to complete tasks set. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils are polite, respectful and friendly towards visitors.
- Responses received from parents and carers show that they think behaviour at the school is excellent and pupils are kept very safe. Pupils say that behaviour is typically outstanding over time and that they are looked after very well. They know and follow the school rules and explain them carefully to pupils new to the school.
- Pupils have a good level of understanding about cultural similarities and differences. They learn about other countries and world religions and this helps ensure that there is no discrimination and good relationships are encouraged.
- All groups of pupils are included in the full range of activities provided by the school. Pupils act as 'play leaders' and make sure all pupils are included in games at playtimes.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and can give examples of how to keep themselves safe, including internet safety.
- Instances of bullying are almost unheard of and pupils say that any minor incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are fully aware of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and actively prevent it from happening.
- Children in Reception develop excellent social skills. They play together harmoniously, share equipment and ask and answer questions extremely politely.
- Attendance is above the national average and nearly all pupils are punctual. This is because they thoroughly enjoy school and all the activities offered, including the breakfast and after-school clubs.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. Clear vision and high expectations are communicated and shared by all staff.
- There are good systems for managing teachers' performance. There is high-quality training and this has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. All leaders are involved in checking up

on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.

- Meetings to measure pupils' progress are used effectively to make sure teachers know how well their pupils learn. They are linked to the performance management targets set for teachers annually.
- Senior leaders ensure the school has good capacity to improve further. There have been notable improvements in achievement in mathematics and the quality of teaching. All the issues raised by the last inspection have been addressed.
- Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent. Children achieve well from their start at the school due to an imaginative curriculum, lively teaching and good-quality support from all adults, who work together as a united team.
- Pupils of all abilities and learning needs have equal access to a good range of learning opportunities that help them to achieve well, including in literacy. A good range of visits and visitors makes the curriculum more exciting for pupils.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. There are many opportunities for pupils to consider their own beliefs and the beliefs of others through collective worship, religious education and the personal and social education programme.
- Parents and carers are very pleased with the school and express positive views. They are kept well informed through newsletters and the school's website. Several parents and carers commented that the school had a genuine 'open-door' policy and that staff were willing to discuss their children's progress at any reasonable time.
- The governors have employed a consultant to carry out the headteacher's statutory performance review.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - governors ask the right questions about how well the school is doing and support the headteacher effectively by making sure she has suitable targets for improving the school
 - governors take part regularly in checking-up on the work of the school, including talking to pupils and looking at their books
 - the governing body fulfils its duties well, including meeting all safeguarding requirements
 - governors evaluate the impact of their spending decisions, including the pupil premium, to ensure that all pupils achieve well.

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	123811
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	406196

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	127
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Biggadike
Headteacher	Anna Yates
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 June 2011
Telephone number	01278 641262
Fax number	01278 641681
Email address	office@mark.somerset.sch.uk

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