

Guyhirn CofE VC Primary School

High Road, Guyhirn, Wisbech, PE13 4ED

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make fast enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics and their attainment by the end of Year 6 is low. Some of the weaknesses raised at the last inspection have not been successfully resolved.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it has not been good enough for some pupils to make the progress they are capable of. Progress is not consistently good.
- Teachers have not yet had the opportunity to show the full impact of the changes that have been introduced, for example, for closer tracking of pupils' progress.
- Considerable changes in staffing over the last few years have resulted in teaching that is not consistently good. Some is insufficiently demanding to help pupils of above-average ability reach the higher levels.
- The acting headteacher, governors and the local authority recognise that further improvements are required to teaching and pupils' achievement. Together, they are effectively tackling these improvement priorities. Some of their work is at too early a stage for the impact to be fully evaluated.
- Subject leaders and governors are not sufficiently involved in checking the work done by teachers and pupils. Further support and training, especially for governors, have not yet been provided to make recent improvements secure.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has quickly identified key priorities for raising standards. He has set out clear expectations for staff, all of whom are committed to improve the quality of education provided.
- Pupils show care and respect for each other and the adults in the school. They feel safe at school, behave well and are well cared for.
- Following a period of long-term staff absence, staffing has stabilised. Leaders, including the governing body, have introduced good systems to check on progress and improve teaching. Pupils are, currently, achieving much better.
- Recent improvements in teaching and, consequently, achievement have been brought about by the strength of school leadership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or part lessons taught by four different teachers, of which two were joint observations with the acting headteacher.
- The inspector spoke formally with one group of pupils and informally with others during work and play.
- The inspector visited two assemblies, listened to pupils read and discussed the work they have been doing in class.
- The inspector observed the school's work and considered a range of information it provided regarding: pupils' achievement, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to attendance and behaviour, the school's self-evaluation of its work, and information on the setting of targets for teachers.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of seven responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the 42 responses from the school's own survey and spoke informally with parents and carers.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Year groups are often very small and pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding allocated for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services, is well-above average, being one third of the school population.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is one third of the school population and well above average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- As the substantive headteacher has been granted leave of absence, an acting headteacher was appointed from September 2011.
- There have been considerable changes in staffing since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are educated onsite. There is no regular offsite alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better and improve pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that teachers use the tracking information on pupils' progress that they have to set work that is demanding enough for all pupils, especially the more able
 - ensuring there is a consistent approach to setting targets for improvement in progress with the pupils themselves.
- Improve achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - accelerating progress in early reading skills
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length and in a range of subjects
 - making sure that the support given to pupils to improve their mathematical skills and knowledge accurately matches their levels of learning.
- Make sure all subject leaders and governors make a proactive contribution to the school's development so that by July 2013 all improvements are secure by:
 - providing further support and training to improve leadership skills of staff
 - calling on the local authority to identify and provide the further support and training that governors need to be fully effective in being able to hold the school to account for its performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make good progress. Although levels of attainment at the end of each key stage vary considerably due to the different ability range of each small year group, they are generally below average.
- Recent initiatives are helping to improve pupils' progress. For example, accurate information to track pupils' rate of progress now measures their performance accurately. Regular meetings to check on progress use the information to direct extra help to those who need it. The learning environment has been refurbished to accommodate work in small groups. However, this good practice has not yet had the full impact intended on pupils' attainment.
- The deployment of extra adult help in lessons since the previous inspection resulted in pupils making good gains in their learning in 2011. Although the school met its pupil-progress targets in 2012, substantial staff absence over that year slowed the pace of learning. Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has not improved fast enough.
- Most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make expected and, sometimes, good progress from skills on entry to the school which are generally well below those typical for children of this age. Good induction procedures help the children to settle quickly. Children play together well and are well behaved. They enjoy finding out things for themselves, alongside adult-led activities, both in the classroom and outdoors.
- Children's speech and language skills are particularly weak on entry and impact on the development of their reading and writing skills across the school. The focus on learning letters and sounds (phonics) and developing basic writing and mathematical skills was not sharp enough in 2012 to ensure that all children were sufficiently well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- Pupils are increasingly developing a love of reading stories and poetry. Their skills in understanding what they read are improving. Although their writing skills are also improving, pupils are not given enough time to write at length in a range of subjects, so do not practise and develop their writing skills well enough.
- Progress requires improvement in mathematics for pupils in Years 3–6, for pupils in English in Years 1–6, especially for those who could reach higher levels. Pupils do not always achieve as well as they could because teachers do not always set work at exactly the right level for each pupil in the class. This is particularly so for more-able pupils.
- The progress of the majority of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is broadly in line with that of other pupils. They do not fall behind other pupils because of the helpful support and care they receive.
- The few pupils who speak English as an additional language usually achieve well in learning English. The one-to-one help they receive in class and the opportunity to speak to fluent English speakers enable them to gain confidence in using the language and understand the requirements of the work they are given.
- In the past, senior leaders have not been quick enough to react to signs of underachievement among some groups of pupils. Under the leadership of the acting headteacher, the school has now introduced a much stronger system for checking pupils' progress and conducting lesson observations. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows this system is helping to improve pupils' rate of

progress.

- The achievement of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is showing improvement. The use of this extra funding to create smaller teaching groups and increase one-to-one support has had a positive impact. Consequently, any gap between these pupils' attainment and that of others is closing because of the additional help they receive.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Initiatives implemented by the acting headteacher to improve the quality of teaching are increasing the rate of pupils' progress. Staffing difficulties have now been overcome and staffing is stable, an important factor in helping the school to improve teaching quality. Although most teaching seen during the inspection was good, it has been very variable in the past, leading to progress that has not been consistently good.
- Much of the teaching seen during the inspection enabled pupils to make good progress. However, teachers are at an early stage in using the system to track pupils' progress in the planning of learning, and they are not yet adept at ensuring work is always well matched to the full range of pupils' abilities.
- There is more rigorous tracking of pupils' skills in reading and writing. This has sharpened the focus much more on improving these skills. However, teachers miss opportunities for pupils of all abilities to apply their developing reading and writing skills in other subjects.
- The weaknesses in planning of learning to suit all abilities applies to English and mathematics. Work in these subjects is not always demanding enough for pupils who should be working at the higher levels and, consequently, they do not always learn as quickly as they could in classes of wide-ranging age and abilities. The help pupils get in advancing their mathematical skills, for example, is not always well adapted to their levels of learning.
- Marking of pupils' work usually tells them what they have done well and how to make further improvements. However, there is not enough emphasis on involving pupils in setting progress targets in English and mathematics to help them, more directly, in aiming to improve.
- There are very good relationships among pupils and adults. These positive relationships help to engage pupils in their learning and ensure their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Skilled teaching assistants work effectively in the classroom and also lead small groups. This means that those pupils requiring extra support, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium, receive sufficient help to make similar progress to that of other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Pupils say that behaviour is good and the majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own questionnaire agree with this. Pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. They work well together and show enthusiasm for learning.
- The school has effective policies to manage behaviour. Pupils say that bullying sometimes

happens, but the school steps in to sort it out. There have been no exclusions for several years and this supports the view that behaviour over time is good.

- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and this was echoed by a majority of parents who responded to (Parent View) and the school's own questionnaire. Pupils say that they know that they can talk to a member of staff if they have a problem and that they will get help to resolve it. The school makes sure that pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe both inside and outside school.
- The use of racist or homophobic language is extremely rare. If it does occur, pupils are confident that it will be challenged and dealt with successfully by staff. The school actively encourages all pupils to express their individuality and to appreciate that people are different.
- Effective management of pupils' behaviour and good use of praise and encouragement contribute to the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, older pupils support the younger pupils very well. The celebration assembly was a wonderful example of how successfully the school has fostered pupils' confidence. It was entirely run by pupils from Year 6 and was extremely well presented.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance and good attendance is celebrated. Most pupils come to school regularly and punctuality is good.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Staffing turbulence, including the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher, has slowed the pace of improvement. The acting headteacher has established clearer leadership roles and higher expectations which ensure staff contribute to leadership and share, directly, accountability for pupils' progress.
- The enthusiasm, drive and determination of the acting headteacher have contributed considerably to improvements in teaching. He has accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff, governors, parents and carers are strongly supportive of the renewed focus the acting headteacher has brought to raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. He has inspired all members of the school community and there is an obvious commitment to driving further improvement.
- There are clear links between managing the performance of staff and salary progression. Teachers know they are accountable for the progress pupils make. Teachers are now setting higher targets for their pupils to reach. Staff morale is high because leaders and managers have successfully communicated their vision for a better, higher-achieving school.
- Teaching is the main focus in the school improvement plan and the acting headteacher checks the quality of teaching in a range of ways. He helps staff to strengthen their teaching by organising opportunities for them to observe leading teachers in other local schools and take part in a series of training sessions.
- The school pays good attention to giving pupils equal opportunity to succeed. The required range of subjects is covered. The range of topics covered is evolving to encourage pupils' interest in learning. However, pupils' acquisition of early reading skills is not fast enough to enable them to make more than expected progress in this skill. Some interesting and creative ways of promoting literacy, for example, through the 'Readathon', are having a positive effect.

Sport, drama and music are seen as key to encouraging individual pupils' gifts and talents. The singing in assembly was an absolute joy to hear.

- The school works very hard to have a positive partnership with parents. Many parents speak with appreciation about the improvements. Parents are increasingly involved with the school and their children's education.
 - All safeguarding requirements are met. Adults are well trained and have a good awareness of child protection requirements and risk assessment.
 - Leaders have introduced new ideas to support pupils' progress. Learning is better planned to help pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in other subjects. More rigorous tracking of pupils' progress leads to regular review. Extra help is well directed to support those at risk of slipping behind. These systems are still developing and have not yet had time to make a significant difference to pupils' attainment. However, inspection evidence shows improved teaching and progress.
 - The school has increasingly drawn effective support from the local authority this term. This has led to some improvements in leadership and management. However, there is, currently, insufficient support and training to enhance the leadership skills of key staff to enable them to be more effective in ensuring they play a full part in taking pupils' achievement and the quality further forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors bring a wide range of professional expertise to their work for the school, and they endorse areas identified for improvement. They are very committed to the long-term improvement of the school. They take responsible action to manage difficulties. For example, governors took the sensible decision to appoint a full-time acting headteacher to cover for the long-term absence of the substantive headteacher. They check carefully on the acting headteacher's performance. Through the improved progress-tracking system, governors know that teaching and achievement are not good enough. They understand the setting of targets for teachers and how this links to salaries and promotion, but have not been well enough informed to apply their understanding effectively. They ensure that the school's finances are sound, directing spending to improving outcomes for pupils. Governors know how the funding for those eligible for the pupil premium is spent. They are fully aware of the impact of that spending and – as with all pupils – intend there should be better impact on those pupils' progress and achievement. Because the school's checking systems have not been rigorous enough, governors did not have a clear oversight to hold the school to account when standards began to fall. They recognise that their skills are underdeveloped and are eager to undertake further training so they can contribute fully to making recent improvements more secure.

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	110806
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	401156

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Edwards
Headteacher	David Morton (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2010
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