

Othery Village School

Othery, Nr Bridgewater, Somerset TA7 0PX

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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' achievement is not good enough in mathematics and writing lessons because some work is too easy for them.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' learning during lessons. Not enough attention is given to changing activities so that all pupils learn well.
- Pupils do not have enough chances to thrive in their independent learning and decision making. The lack of problem-solving tasks hinders their better personal development.
- Governors do not effectively hold the school to account. They do not gather enough first-hand evidence of how the school is doing.
- Feedback given to teachers about their teaching is not clear enough about what impact their teaching is having on pupils' learning.
- Checks by subject leaders to see if teaching is working are not effective. They visit classrooms but are not confident in checking what has, or has not, made a difference to pupils' learning. Any concerns are not quickly followed up.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is always good at work and play. They are eager learners and often persevere, even when teaching lacks imagination.
- The school's method of teaching reading is strong. Pupils are helped to read widely and often. They are effectively challenged when reading and so achieve well.
- Pupils are well cared for. Bullying is extremely rare and pupils feel safe in school.
- The headteacher's drive and determination to improve the school are strong. Since the last inspection, she has successfully tackled some poor teaching.
- Pupils and parents like the extra benefits of working in partnership with Middlezoy Primary School. Year 6 pupils feel better prepared for secondary school as a result.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector saw teaching in both classes and observed six lessons and an assembly. Two lessons were watched jointly with the headteacher. A scrutiny of pupils' displays and other materials was carried out with the headteacher at Middlezoy School, where Othery pupils attend lessons in the afternoon.
- Two meetings were held with different groups of pupils to find out about their views of behaviour and marking in books.
- The inspector met with senior leaders responsible for English, mathematics and disabled pupils and/or special educational needs. A meeting was held with four members of the governing body and a phone call taken with a representative of the local authority.
- Twenty five responses to the questionnaire on the Parent View website were considered.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents and pupils' work, including the school's plans for improvement, information on pupils' progress, reports to governors, and pupils' mathematics and writing books to see the quality of their work over time.

Inspection team

Richard Light, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Since its last inspection, the school has been federated with Middlezoy Primary School. The headteacher leads, and a single governing body serves, both schools. Middlezoy was not inspected as part of this inspection.
- Othery Village School is exceptionally small when compared to primary schools nationally.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who receive extra help with their learning (school action) is average. The proportion who require more in-depth support (school action plus) or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are entitled to pupil premium (additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is very small.
- The school runs a breakfast club managed by the governing body for all pupils in the Othery and Middlezoy Federation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teachers' skills so that lessons and their impact on learning are consistently good by:
 - making sure lesson plans for mathematics and writing are sharply matched to pupils' wide range of abilities
 - helping teachers get better at checking pupils' learning throughout lessons and adapting lessons where necessary
 - designing activities that enable pupils to make independent decisions and tackle open-ended problems.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that when they watch lessons, leaders focus on how well all pupils are learning, tell teachers clearly what they need to do to improve their lessons further and include this in the school's plans for improvement
 - giving senior leaders clear roles and responsibilities, linked to targets for teachers, when checking the quality of teaching and learning and how to effectively follow up any issues
 - training governors so that they can rigorously check for themselves how well the school is performing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not yet good. Learning slows down and speeds up as pupils move up through the school. The slower progress is not widespread across all subjects; it is just too inconsistent.
- Standards are typically average. There are wide differences in standards between reading, writing and mathematics. This is particularly so for the most and least able pupils. Over the last few years, pupils' attainment in reading has been notably stronger than in mathematics or writing.
- Pupils' performance in mathematics is not always good. For some current pupils in Years 3 and 5, their progress in mathematics has been too slow at times during the past two years. Teachers do not challenge pupils to solve mathematical problems or investigations of which they are capable.
- The progress of pupils' writing slows as they move through the school. Good progress in writing during Key Stage 1 is not maintained and the rate of learning drops. Not enough opportunities are given for older pupils to write at greater length.
- Pupils enjoy looking at books and reading. Pupils in Year 1 use what they know about sounds, and how they make up words, to 'have a go' at unfamiliar texts. The close attention they receive helps them go on to be successful readers later in the school.
- Children start school with skills and knowledge below what would normally be expected for their age. They mix well with pupils in the Year 1 and 2 class, making good progress in reading, writing and calculating during their Reception Year. Those who are ready benefit from more focused reading sessions with Year 1 pupils. This is why they are making good progress and catch up with other pupils nationally by the time they enter Year 1.
- The small number of pupils who have received the pupil premium (additional government funding) perform well. Their standards in reading, writing and mathematics compare positively with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who receive additional support in lessons (school action) and those who require more in-depth support (school action plus) or who have a statement of special educational needs progress well in reading. This is because some of the work of teaching assistants in small groups and in one-to-one sessions is highly effective. This approach is not having the same impact in writing and mathematics, so pupils' achievements in these areas are not as strong.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is too inconsistent. Staff changes have meant some have missed earlier training. There is not enough good teaching in all subjects to make sure all pupils make consistently good progress. Specifically, the teaching of writing and mathematics needs to improve.
- Teachers' planning and what they expect in lessons do not always consider pupils' very wide range of abilities. As a result, activities and work are not set at the right level or precisely enough to meet their needs to enable them all to make good progress.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' learning in lessons. They tend to keep to the planned activity, rather than listening to pupils' responses. There are too few times where teachers extend and change work during lessons or use pupils' errors as opportunities to explain further.
- Teaching of mathematics needs to improve. Mathematical concepts such as halves and quarters or the area of shapes are not developed well enough in lessons. There are few opportunities for pupils to solve problems, investigate mathematical solutions or explore number patterns. This limits pupils' independent enquiry skills.
- The teaching of reading is good. Small group work in the Key Stage 1 and Reception class by teachers and other adults is precise, lively and carefully develops pupils' reading skills. These skills are built on well in Key Stage 2, using an on-line reading programme to check pupils'

reading comprehension and understanding. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the positive impact this programme has had on their attitudes to reading.

- The pace of some lessons is too slow. In one science lesson, the use of netbook computers was not an efficient method of introducing forces. Some pupils could not log on quickly, and others re-read the same webpage several times, wasting precious learning time.
- Targets for pupils are overused. Teachers understand what pupils need to achieve over time but day-to-day marking and feedback do not build on what pupils actually know. Pupils are not routinely asked to check how well they are progressing towards their targets.
- Teachers are good at promoting good relations. This encourages the pupils to work happily with others of different ages. Some teaching assistants give good support to the pupils whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. In one mathematics lesson, a Year 4 pupil who received one-to-one support made good progress and was proud of the work he had completed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have a consistently positive attitude to learning. This could be even better but is currently limited because lessons are not letting pupils flourish and thrive in their independent learning.
- Pupils settle very quickly and work hard when they are given interesting and challenging work. These qualities set them up well for the future. Pupils were heard to say, 'I want to get quickly on to the extension activity' during the inspection. Even when lessons lack imagination, pupils persevere and keep up their enthusiasm for learning.
- Pupils' behaviour observed during the inspection was always good. Discussions with pupils and parents' views support the notion that this is typical. Pupils respond well to the 'personal points' they receive as rewards for positive efforts in and around the school.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. They are very happy and well supported. They enjoy the different themes they cover through the varied curriculum, and talk enthusiastically about the things they do in school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. Recorded incidents of bullying are very rare indeed and pupils said that there was little teasing. If this was to happen, they were sure it would be sorted out 'immediately'.
- Children in Reception settle quickly into the school routines. They enjoy the friendly, supportive atmosphere of the Year 1 and 2 class and all the choices they have to explore and learn. They gain in confidence from the older pupils and are familiar with the expectations and routines.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The quality of feedback to teachers by leaders needs to improve. When lessons are watched, clear judgements on the quality of teaching and its impact on the learning for different groups of pupils are not given. This hampers teachers' better understanding of what to improve in their teaching to help pupils make better progress in their learning.
- Formal reviews by subject leaders of the performance of teachers do not happen often enough. Strategic actions are not being followed through to see that all pupils make good progress all the time. Some changes have helped, for example to enhance the leadership of special educational needs at Othery. These are moves in the right direction, but in general, subject leaders are not having a strong enough influence on improving teaching.
- The headteacher has made 'Great Teaching' the priority of her work. She has not shied away from challenging weaker teaching and taking action she believes will benefit the children. This is correct because the quality of teaching needs to improve if the school is to become a good school.

- The inspector was told of the 'determination', 'drive' and 'ambition' when staff and governors described the work of the headteacher in aspiring to be a great school. There is a constant message for 'Great Teaching'. Parents' views support this vision but recognise there is still work to do.
 - The strategic partnership decision to join with Middlezoy has improved Othery School. Joint lessons for Year 6 pupils better prepare them for secondary school. The mixing of younger pupils for other subjects has meant personal, social and community barriers have been overcome. Specialist teaching for music and Physical Education has enhanced lessons in these subjects.
 - Some teaching has improved. However, there is more work to do until it is good enough. The inspector found that the headteacher challenged effectively where performance targets had not been met. This level of challenge was not always seen from other senior leaders.
 - The local authority has provided support in the past through visits to the school by an advisor. Some of this involved supporting individual teachers. This has had limited impact on improving the consistency and quality of teaching.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is yet to show, through their gathering of first-hand evidence, that they are holding the school to account. They know there are still gaps in standards between different subjects across the school. Governors are aware of how the extra money is being used within the school and the difference this is making. They know what the school's data are showing and that there have been weaknesses in teaching. Governance requires improvement because it does not provide enough challenge to improve these areas. Governors recognise that the headteacher is the driving force across the Middlezoy and Othery school partnership.
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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	123691
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	403730

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Hughes
Headteacher	Helen Ormerod
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
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