

Marksbury Church of England Primary School

Marksbury, Bath, Somerset, BA2 9HS

Inspection dates 13–14 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This school has improved well since the previous inspection under the inspirational leadership of a much respected headteacher.
- The school's excellent promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins the pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning and behaviour and their outstanding achievement.
- Pupils excel in all subjects and most notably in their confident and very well developed speaking and listening skills that support their excellent ability to learn from each other during lessons.
- Teaching is outstanding and is typified throughout the school by excellent relationships, high expectations that pupils will succeed, and skilled questioning that draws out and builds on pupils' ideas.
- The development of the pupils' ability to learn for themselves and to use and apply their skills during topic work and school performances and events is another strong feature.
- Pupils do not always check the accuracy of their spellings as they write.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe at school because, 'Very caring adults know us so well.' As a result, attendance is above average, pupils love coming to school and do so with a determination to learn and give of their best.
- Strong leadership by senior staff and governors, who work closely as a team, makes sure that, as at the time of the previous inspection, 'every inch of space', resources and staff skills are used as efficiently as possible. This offers a rich breadth of learning activity which helps all pupils achieve equally successfully.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 11 lessons and was accompanied by the headteacher during these observations.
- The inspector observed morning playtime and lunch breaks and also attended an assembly, a concert and a Nativity performance.
- Meetings were held with pupil members of the school council and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and break times. The inspector met with governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The inspector also spoke informally with a number of parents and carers as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector held meetings with school staff, including senior leaders and teachers in charge of subjects.
- The inspector also consulted 16 parents' and carers' responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection and examined 14 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data of pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is below average in size.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage and few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of one Reception class. All other classes in the school are mixed-age classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is no alternative provision provided.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the accuracy of pupils' spelling as pupils move through the year groups by strengthening the ability of pupils to think about, and check, their spellings for themselves as they write.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children's skills on entry generally match those expected, but this varies from year to year. Often several children start with less well-developed communication, language and literacy skills. Nevertheless, all children make outstanding progress in Reception, especially in communicating and working extremely well together.
- Excellent progress continues through Years 1 and 2, as pupils quickly extend their ability to use their well-developed spoken vocabulary to enrich their writing and to apply numeracy skills when solving problems.
- Pupils make outstanding progress through Years 3 to 6, as their developing skills and increasing maturity enable them to find things out for themselves and to communicate and learn very effectively from each other. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 perceptively considered the characters in their stories and calculated 'Santa's journey' from London to Birmingham to Cambridge.
- Standards in Year 6 have been above average in English and mathematics in recent years, and currently across the school higher than expected numbers of pupils are meeting and exceeding expected attainment levels, reflecting pupils' outstanding achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and others aided by pupil premium funding also make excellent progress, for example extending their spoken and written vocabulary when working in groups supported by teaching assistants. As a result of this work, there are no gaps in the achievements of these pupils and all pupils nationally.
- Throughout the school, more-able pupils are fully stretched and have harder tasks readily available. At times, the accuracy of pupils' spelling does not match the richness of their spoken language and reduces the quality of their writing.
- Pupils learn to read very well and enjoy books as they move through the different year groups. They are taught and learn the sounds that letters make in a step-by-step way and benefit from being heard to read by an adult at home and at school and with other pupils in small-group sessions.
- Parents and carers and governors greatly value how the school promotes the exemplary relationships of pupils and eagerness to learn that prepare them so very well for secondary education.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching has been rigorously improved since the time of the previous inspection. Teaching continues to be outstanding in Reception, where excellent relationships boost children's joy in learning. There is now similarly strong teaching through Years 1 to 6.
- Frequent observations of lessons by senior leaders and careful checks on how well pupils are doing make sure that pupils' differing needs are identified at an early stage. This makes sure that teachers help pupils to learn and progress at their own level and offer additional adult support to meet pupils' individual learning needs.
- For example, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and others new to the school or from different backgrounds, are skilfully supported either individually or in small groups. As a result, they develop self-confidence and the skills needed to help them achieve as outstandingly well as other pupils.
- A key aspect underpinning improvement lies in the way that teachers use pupils' personal qualities as a springboard to raising their academic achievements. Supportive discussion in small groups or pairs is a well-established approach that helps pupils to explore their different ideas.
- Teachers also promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well, particularly by valuing their ideas and using them to share learning with others. They also

encourage pupils to explain their thinking to each other and the rest of the class. This helps to develop their exemplary speaking and listening skills and excellent progress in all classes.

- For example, in an English lesson in Years 1 and 2, pupils discussed and wrote sentences with a variety of opening words that developed their stories and sustained the attention of the reader.
- Teachers place a strong emphasis on questioning the pupils carefully and then encouraging pupils to think for themselves before answering. For example, during mathematics in Years 5 and 6, pupils were challenged to take part in role play solving money problems.
- When marking the pupils' written work, teachers raise relevant questions about what pupils have learnt and point out the next steps on how to improve further.
- This approach is highly successful, for example in extending pupils' numeracy and problem-solving skills in mathematics and developing the pupils' ability to write with expression in well-organised sentences. On occasions, though, pupils are not always encouraged to spell their imaginative choices of words correctly and this slows their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- One parent wrote, expressing the views of almost all those who spoke with the inspector, 'Marksbury is a warm, happy, caring environment in which my children have flourished academically, socially and emotionally.'
- The inspector found that, as at the time of the previous inspection, behaviour in lessons and in all parts of the school was consistently exemplary.
- As a result, attendance is consistently well above average and reflects the pupils' great enjoyment of school.
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about the different forms of bullying, including internet and racial bullying, but confidently state that, 'It doesn't happen at this school because we have lots of friends,' and, 'Adults are there for us.'
- Pupils are quick to look after each other at lunch and break times and respond to the excellent role models of caring staff, with older pupils particularly considerate of younger ones.
- During lessons and performances pupils take as much pleasure in the achievements of others as they do of their own, as for example during the Years 3 to 6 concert where a significant number of pupils demonstrated their considerable instrumental skills.
- Supported by a caring Christian ethos, the pupils commit themselves wholeheartedly to their learning in and out of lessons. In particular, they demonstrate their exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the very supportive way that they work together and help each other to learn.
- This was movingly evident during the Reception and Years 1 and 2 Nativity, for example, as pupils determinedly supported each other and showed their exceptional speaking and singing skills.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff and governors, and all parents and carers interviewed, greatly value the leadership of the headteacher who allows staff and governors to make very valuable contributions to the running of the school.
- As a result, strong teamwork and a willingly shared sense of direction among all members of staff strengthen the very effective management of the school.
- All pupils have full access to the rich spread of activities that the school offers them. Equal care is given to developing their personal and social qualities as well as their capacity for learning. This helps them to keep up their outstanding achievement.
- Leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and what the school needs to do to improve even more. They carefully check how well pupils are doing and teaching quality is frequently and rigorously reviewed.

- Any pupils at risk of falling behind are accurately identified at an early stage and are efficiently and very effectively targeted and improved. This is seen, for example, in the way that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, receive additional adult support so that they can achieve as well as other pupils.
- Information from lesson observations is used successfully to set targets for teachers to improve their work further and to support their training. Recent examples include improving the way pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make and the way their problem-solving skills are developed.
- The school makes sure that discrimination is not tolerated at all and fosters good relations with parents and carers and other agencies.
- The local authority continues to provide effective light touch support including, more recently, training on the statutory recruitment of 'safe staff' and training for governors on financial management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly supportive, but also well organised, lively and ask searching questions. They undertake frequent first-hand visits to the school to observe teaching and learning and to talk to pupils and teachers. They discuss these visits during their meetings, alongside the headteacher's extremely thorough reports and frequently updated evaluations of the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Governors understand how the school links pay to performance and know about the targets teachers are given to improve their work. The governing body is very well represented in terms of experience, expertise and works well with other schools and organisations in the local community. Over time it has built up an accurate picture of the strengths and needs of the school, including the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements in relation to other similar schools. Governors fulfil their statutory duties very securely, for example safeguarding pupils' welfare by fully vetting all those who work in the school. Governors manage finances very effectively and make sure that staff appraisal and professional training are used well to strengthen leadership and pupils' learning. Governors also check that pupil premium funding gives eligible pupils equal access to school activities and provides timely additional support to help them learn as well as other pupils.

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	109199
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	403084

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	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Allen-Smith
Headteacher	Lucy Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2008
Telephone number	01761 470628
Fax number	01761 470628
Email address	marksbury_pri@bathnes.gov.uk

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