

Ecchinswell and Sydmonton Church of England Primary School

Ecchinswell, Newbury, RG20 4UA

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2013

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils achieve well because the teaching is good and they have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' make particularly good progress in developing their reading and numeracy skills.
- All groups of pupils make good progress through each year. This is because teachers keep a careful eye on how individuals are getting on and adapt lessons accordingly.
- Pupils enjoy school. Teachers plan work which sparks their interest and motivates them to try their best.
- The school is a welcoming community in which pupils feel valued and safe. They behave well and get along with one another and with the adults.
- Strong leadership is underpinned by the headteacher's unswerving drive to ensure all pupils do as well as they can.
- The quality of teaching is checked thoroughly and the meticulous analysis of pupils' progress means that glitches are spotted quickly. Staff training has led to improvements in the quality of teaching, especially in matching work to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils' progress has accelerated.
- Governors are extremely well informed and play an active part in driving improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils' written work is generally grammatically correct and spelling is accurate, some pupils are not confident in structuring sentences skilfully and using a wide range of vocabulary to bring their writing to life.
- Pupils often find difficulty in seeing how they can use their secure calculation skills when tackling mathematical problems.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 lessons, six of which were joint observations with the headteacher. He listened to pupils reading and discussed their reading habits and preferences with them.
- The inspector discussed various aspects of the school with pupils and looked at a range of their work. He took account of the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- During the inspection, the inspector took account of the 24 responses to the online Parent View survey and discussions with parents and carers. He took account of the 12 questionnaires returned by staff.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement, teachers' plans, safeguarding arrangements, records relating to behaviour and attendance, governing body minutes and records of the school leaders' monitoring of lessons.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average and serves a wide rural area.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for whom the school receives additional funding through pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents and carers serving in the armed forces and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs (supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs) is above average. These needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have behavioural difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school outside the usual times is above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Apart from the Reception class, pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes: Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; and Years 5 and 6.
- No pupils from the school attend alternative provision.
- The headteacher took up her post in April 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' skills in writing by:
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to develop their sentence structure and vocabulary through talking, discussing in pairs or small groups, drama and role play
 - providing examples from literature to illustrate how sentence structure and the use of language can be used to engage the reader.
- Increase pupils' confidence in using their numeracy skills when tackling mathematical problems by:
 - relating more of pupils' day-to-day work to real-life situations
 - placing further emphasis on using a variety of strategies when solving mathematical problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- As children enter the Reception class, their social, language and number skills are generally well below the levels expected for their age. Although they make good progress, by the end of Reception, levels of attainment have been typically below average. The current year group, however, started at a higher point; they are making rapid progress and are on course to reach at least average levels.
- Pupils' reading skills build swiftly as they move through the school. Daily phonics (letters and the sounds they make) teaching means they tackle new words with increased confidence. When reading to the inspector, pupils in Key Stage 1 showed how sounding letters out and blending them together enabled them to make a good attempt at reading words such as 'scented' and 'highness'. Older pupils read fluently and expressively, and develop mature insights. Commenting on her reading of a modern version of *Great Expectations*, one pupil said, 'As it's set in the past, the language is often unusual and unfamiliar.'
- Pupils make good progress in writing, particularly in using the correct grammar and accurate spelling. Many show considerable flair in engaging the reader. For some pupils, their limited vocabulary and lack of variety in their sentence structure hinder their progress towards the higher levels.
- Pupils gain secure skills in basic numeracy, for example the instant recall of multiplication tables. When it comes to spotting how these skills can be used to solve written problems, some pupils do not see this immediately and rely too much on prompting by adults.
- The rate of progress made by pupils entitled to free school meals matches and often exceeds that of other pupils, and the picture is similar for pupils with special educational needs. This is due to highly effective support, both within lessons and during individually tailored work in small groups.
- Those pupils joining the school during the year are assigned a 'buddy' and, after a brief settling in period, are assessed to ensure they are placed in the appropriate groups. As a result, they soon get up to speed and make similar progress to their classmates.
- The way the school painstakingly seeks to ensure all pupils do well reflects the high level of commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Lively, engaging teaching within a vibrant and attractive environment means children in Reception respond eagerly and are unfailingly enthusiastic. An effective balance between short whole-class lessons led by the teacher and activities chosen by the children provides a wide range of opportunities for children to learn and have fun.
- Across the school, lessons move on apace. Introductions are brisk, which keeps pupils on their toes. With the help of the very able teaching assistants, pupils are often split into ability groups right from the outset, so that the work can be pitched at the right level for each group in the mixed-age classes.
- Classroom displays celebrate pupils' achievement and include many prompts and suggestions made by pupils, for example, lists of adjectives and adverbs they have come across. Where teachers draw on literature to illustrate ideas, this often has a powerful effect. For example, after studying the way Sylvia Plath used personification, Year 6 pupils made some excellent attempts at using the device in their own poems. However, this approach is not consistent across the school.
- Where teachers provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas, act out scenarios and learn from one another, this has a positive effect on the quality of pupils' subsequent written work. This was evident when Year 5 and 6 pupils worked orally in pairs before writing a script

for a radio interview.

- Pupils respond well to the teachers' encouragement to learn basic number facts and are eager to take part in the weekly competitions. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to relate number work to day-to-day life and this means pupils are occasionally too easily stumped when faced with problems set in a real context. Older pupils talked about their 'heuristic' (working independently; exploring different possibilities) approach in trying out different ways to solve problems, but this is not well established across the school.
- Teachers are highly imaginative when planning the curriculum. The positive impact of this is evident from the wide range of high-quality work in the portfolios made after each unit of study. Topics such as 'Uganda Uncovered' and 'Water, Water Everywhere' engage and stimulate pupils.
- Pupils receive very good feedback through teachers' marking. They make comments about how well pupils have met the 'I can...' objectives that are typically made clear at the beginning of lessons. From Reception onwards, pupils are increasingly involved in reviewing their own work; at first using 'traffic lights' and moving on to make more precise comments about what they need to do next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Children in the Reception class settle quickly. They soon get used to school routines and happily learn and play together.
 - Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They greet visitors warmly and politely and are always willing to help out, for example, by tidying up after lunch. They respond positively and proudly when appointed as house captains and given other roles of responsibility.
 - Pupils said that the friendly family atmosphere is one of the best things about the school. Playtimes take place almost entirely without incident and pupils look out for one another. Older pupils are always ready to help younger ones if they have minor accidents. Most pupils are keen to contribute in lessons, although a few are not as confident as their classmates, and tend to sit back rather than join in.
 - Rewards and sanctions 'ladders' are used effectively to promote and sustain good behaviour. Younger pupils are particularly proud to 'move their peg up a notch' on the classroom charts.
 - Teachers and support assistants make every effort to ensure pupils with specific behavioural problems take as full a part as possible in lessons. In addition to a regular programme of support, the school's Tree House nurture room provides a secure haven for pupils when they cannot cope in the classroom. When individual pupils occasionally play up, the other pupils show a remarkable degree of resilience and, for the most part, continue as normal.
 - Pupils say they feel entirely safe and that bullying is very rare. They are well versed in keeping themselves safe, for example, they are well aware of how social websites and mobile phones can be misused. Parents and carers are very confident that their children are well looked after.
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The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher plays a pivotal role in driving improvements. She has the confidence of staff, parents and carers and governors and knows every pupil well. Staff work very well as a team and are very positive about how the headteacher checks the quality of teaching and arranges appropriate training. Teachers have grown in confidence and honed their skills, particularly in organising learning in the mixed-age classes to ensure pupils work at the appropriate level and do not cover old ground.
 - The headteacher and subject leaders regularly check how pupils are getting on by looking at their books and analysing assessment information. This enables them to provide guidance for teachers and, when necessary, allocate additional resources, including extra support for individuals. The local authority supports the school well, providing advice and guidance, but is confident that school leaders are well placed to move the school forward without the need for external help.
 - The curriculum is well planned to stimulate and motivate pupils. Each unit of study begins with a 'hook', such as a visit or film, designed to rouse pupils' interest and curiosity. Pupils have good opportunities to practise, consolidate and improve their skills. For example, work centred on Jack and the Beanstalk involved younger pupils studying the life cycle of plants, making models of a rainforest, using computer graphics and writing imaginatively.
 - Staff provide strong role models in their relationships with one another. The celebration of religious festivals and the exchange of information with a link school in Uganda help pupils to see the similarities and appreciate the differences of diverse cultures. A good range of clubs, including a very successful choir, also supports pupils' personal and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school**
- Members of the governing body have a very secure understanding of how the school's performance compares with achievement nationally. They have a well-informed view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors scrutinise the school's meticulous assessment records carefully and raise pertinent questions. For example, the governors' minutes record insightful queries about the impact of additional training for teachers on pupils' progress in writing. Governors closely monitor the use of the pupil premium. They seek assurances that the funds spent on, for example, the nurture room and one-to-one support, contribute to positive outcomes. Governors keep a close eye on how teachers' performance is managed, to ensure that staff who make additional contributions and provide role models in their teaching are suitably rewarded.
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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	116285
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	401586

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	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Cratchley
Headteacher	Sharon Pole
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2009
Telephone number	01635 298288
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