

St Blaise Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Milton Heights, Abingdon, OX14 4DR

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

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:

- Checks on the quality of teaching have not ensured that there is enough good or better teaching to enable pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils have the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to use when working on their own.
- Not all of the teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning in every lesson.
- Expectations about how pupils present their work are not high enough.
- Some of the activities planned for Reception Year children are not always as purposeful as they should be.
- Pupils do not always apply the spelling skills they have learned in their writing and they sometimes find writing tasks tedious.
- There is not sufficient expertise in middle leadership to keep a close enough check on improvements in teaching.

The school has the following strengths:

- The caring leadership of the headteacher has created a family atmosphere where staff know children well and this is appreciated by all.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe and secure. They respect each other, know right from wrong and relate well to others.
- Strong partnerships with parents and carers help pupils in their learning.
- The staff and governing body share the headteacher's accurate view of the school's effectiveness.
- Reading is the most successful area of pupils' learning. They enjoy reading and use their skills to help them in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons taught by four teachers, and made three shorter observations.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, the local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- Joint observations of teaching and learning were conducted with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers and took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' workbooks, and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, minutes of governing body meetings and planning documents.
- The inspector took account of the 13 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Blaise Church of England Primary School is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- There are three mixed-age classes: one for Reception and Year 1; one for Year 2 and Year 3; and one for Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Most pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for extra funding (known as the pupil premium) is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- An above-average number of pupils are admitted to school at times other than the usual time of entry.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The acting headteacher and one part-time teacher and one part-time middle manager have been appointed since the last inspection and one teacher and one middle manager have left the school.
- The school runs a breakfast club for all pupils on three days a week and there is a privately run nursery on the school site, which was not part of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by making sure that all teachers:
 - make regular checks on pupils' learning in every lesson
 - ensure that pupils have the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to undertake independent learning
 - always have high expectations of pupils' presentation of their work.
- Improve teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that all activities are purposeful.
- Improve achievement in writing by:
 - planning exciting opportunities to make writing more interesting
 - ensuring pupils apply the spelling skills they are learning to all of their writing.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - broadening the expertise of middle leadership to keep a rigorous check on the impact of actions to improve teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too few pupils, including those who have had the benefit of being at school all the way through, make fast enough progress during their time at school.
- The skill levels with which children start school in the Reception Year vary. Small year groups and a high proportion of pupils who are admitted to school at times other than the usual time of entry mean that achievement fluctuates from year to year.
- Because the quality of teaching is not consistent, pupils' progress varies from class to class and subject to subject. Writing is the weakest area for all groups of pupils. They make the best progress in reading.
- One-to-one tuition helps to close learning gaps for those pupils who join the school part-way through their education and they too make expected progress.
- Over the past three years, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have improved from significantly below the national average to being broadly in line with those of all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at both key stages. Neither of the pupils at the end of key stage 2 were known to be eligible for extra funding.
- Although the school has focused on improving pupils' skills in spelling and punctuation, pupils are not applying what they have learned to all of their writing. For some pupils writing tasks are not as exciting as other aspects of their learning.
- Children in the Reception Year show a clear grasp of the letters and sounds that they have been taught and use them to sound out simple words. They also enjoy acting out a story with the help of a skilled teaching assistant. However, there are times when children do not have a purposeful activity, particularly when they are outside.
- Accurate identification and an appropriate range of extra support enable disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make the same rate of progress as their peers.
- Pupils known to be eligible for extra funding benefit from a wide range of extra support, such as financial help for trips and one-to-one tuition in reading, writing and mathematics, which helps to narrow the attainment gap between this group of pupils and the rest.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although some teaching is good, teaching requires improvement because it does not always promote good achievement.
- In some lessons teachers are so focused on the group with whom they are working they do not notice other pupils are either struggling or not working.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils who are working on their own have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out their tasks and as a result these pupils mark time and progress slows.
- Teachers do not teach pupils to take pride in the presentation of their work so that even when pupils have tried very hard, their work can appear careless.
- A wide range of different activities are planned for children in the Reception Year. When these are planned well children make progress at a quicker rate. However, activities to support and challenge children's learning through play are not always so well planned and the pace of learning slows.
- Where teaching is more effective the rate of pupils' progress accelerates and pupils want to do their best. All of the Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils enjoyed a quick, challenging start to a mathematics lesson on fractions. Each group displayed the answer to their particular question while the rest of the class used their secure knowledge of mathematics to guess the question.
- Pupils say that teachers' marking helps them to improve their work and they are always given

time to make their corrections.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and want to do well. The school is a happy community where pupils work successfully as a team. They respect one another, know wrong from right and appreciate the different traditions and beliefs.
- Although they know about different forms of bullying, pupils are adamant that it does not happen in school. They are confident that, if anything did happen, there would always be someone to listen to them and matters would be quickly and fairly resolved.
- Pupils not only feel safe and secure but they know how to keep themselves safe. While pupils' behaviour outside lessons is not impeccable it is good and pupils are proud of their skills to resolve any minor conflicts themselves.
- The school's rates of attendance are now average, having previously dipped when two families spent long periods of time abroad.
- Although it is only run on three days a week, the breakfast club helps families where parents and carers have to go to work early and gives the pupils attending a good start to the day.
- Parents and carers are appreciative of what the school strives to achieve. All of those who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent or carer. They also said that the school dealt effectively with bullying and that their children were happy, felt safe and behaved well.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because neither teaching nor achievement are typically good.
- As the school's middle manager has not yet been replaced, most of the strategic direction of the school falls to the acting headteacher in cooperation with the governing body. The acting headteacher also has a teaching commitment and is the school's special educational needs coordinator. Although there is clear evidence that improvements have been made, this heavy workload has slowed progress towards achieving consistently good teaching throughout the school.
- The local authority has given good support to the school, helping the newly appointed acting headteacher to increase her effectiveness and understand her role. The school has also received support from mathematics and literacy consultants. All of this has helped to increase the percentage of good teaching.
- Since the last inspection marking has improved and this is in turn helping pupils to better their work. Pupils also now know and understand what they have to do to reach their targets. This, together with a greater emphasis on reading, has brought about improvements. Achievement in mathematics has also improved.
- The way in which subjects are planned has also been improved to make learning more interesting. Pupils enjoy working in family groups across the age ranges on theme days or during weeks such as 'outdoor learning' and 'international week' and this makes learning very relevant to their lives. Partnerships with parents and carers have been strengthened with 100% attendance at parents' meeting. All of this clearly demonstrates the school's capacity to improve.
- Teachers' performance is managed appropriately. School and personal targets are set and the level of support needed to reach those targets is then discussed. Reviews of performance tackle weaknesses and recognise and reward improvements in teaching.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity. All teachers are now held to account and pupils' progress is checked at regular meetings. If any pupil is seen to underperform, extra help is arranged.

■ The governance of the school:

- Members of the governing body play an active part in the strategic direction of the school. They have an accurate view of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching and how pupils' test results compare nationally and to those of other similar schools. Good quality local authority training and their own fact-finding missions in school have helped them to understand where weaknesses in teaching lie. They realise that more work has to be done to increase the proportion of good and better teaching. They understand about the management of teachers' performance and how it must be used to improve the quality of teaching. Governors are fully involved with setting targets for the school and hold it to account. They ensure that statutory duties such as safeguarding are met and that financial resources are managed well. They know that pupils known to be eligible for extra funding are beginning to close any learning gaps they may have in attainment because they have seen the pupils' work and they check that money allocated for this purpose is used appropriately.

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	123178
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	402143
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	55
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Smith
Headteacher	Ruth Leach
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 February 2010
Telephone number	01235 831368
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