

Benson Church of England Primary School

Oxford Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 6LX

Inspection dates 21–22 February 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:

- Pupils' achievement across the school is not uniform and many pupils do not make good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is too slow.
- Too much teaching requires improvement, as teachers do not consistently challenge pupils to achieve more and make good progress.
- The assessment of pupils' work is not consistently rigorous enough.
- Leaders, managers and governors did not do enough following the last inspection to ensure that all pupils fulfilled their potential.

The school has the following strengths:

- Pupils contribute enthusiastically to the school in many different ways. They enjoy coming to school and their attendance is high.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and very well celebrated through the high-quality work that is proudly displayed.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.
- The newly appointed headteacher is providing strong leadership. She is establishing new and refining systems, and has introduced a range of initiatives to address the school's weaknesses.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 13 lessons, observing seven teachers. Five lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The team also conducted a series of further brief observations of learning and conducted a scrutiny of pupils' work, in conjunction with senior leaders.
- Members of the inspection team discussed with pupils their views about the school. They also spoke to parents and carers as they collected their children from school.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, the senior leadership team and staff.
- Inspectors took account of the 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's analysis of its own questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at improvement plans, records and analyses of pupils' behaviour, the tracking of pupils' progress and examples of pupils' work. They scrutinised the school's attendance figures and monitoring information.

Inspection team

Raymond Lau, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Brigid de Rivaz

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage is low. Most pupils are from a White British background. Almost all of the pupils speak English as their first language.
- An increasing number of the pupils are from families with a parent or carer serving overseas in the armed forces.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and those from service families, is above average.
- The proportions of pupils with special educational needs supported by school action, school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs, are average. Some of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has been in post since 1 January 2013. Since the previous inspection, there has been a high staff turnover. A number of teaching staff are new or in the early stages of their career.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching uniformly at least good across the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what all pupils can do and provide them with suitable challenges
 - assess pupils accurately and use the information to plan and implement activities tailored to the needs of all pupils
 - give pupils opportunities to respond to the feedback given on their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, so that it is at least good overall, by:
 - personalising pupils' learning and making activities more exciting and engaging
 - ensuring that the provision and support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs enables them to make consistently good progress.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring middle leaders rigorously check and track pupils' progress and employ effective strategies to improve pupils' performance
 - ensuring that the governing body continues to develop its expertise, taking advantage of the external review already being undertaken by the local authority, to more effectively evaluate the school's performance, support and challenge leaders so that pupils make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils is not uniform across the school. Some pupils now make better progress, particularly in Years 1 and 3. Pupils do better in some subjects than in others, and different groups of pupils have different rates of progress. Boys do less well than girls, for example, and pupils are weaker in mathematics than in English.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make slow progress. This is due to a lack of challenge and the low expectations of some staff.
- Those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to their peers. The average point scores for the very small number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are lower than those of the same ages.
- In 2012, pupils' attainment declined to broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and this represents adequate progress, given their starting points. In the phonics (letters and sounds) screening check, pupils achieved results that were above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is average, although it is lower in mathematics than in English.
- Children normally enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with the knowledge and skills expected for their age and they make good progress in Reception. During the inspection, children were actively engaged in a wide range of activities and developing their confidence and team skills well.
- As a result of better leadership and the redeployment of staff, pupils' progress is starting to accelerate. In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in mathematics is now improving as a result of more effective teaching. This was evident in a Year 1 class where pupils were adding numbers using different methods well. Nevertheless, it is too early to measure the full impact of these actions on pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies within the year groups and within subjects. Teachers do not consistently plan activities that are sufficiently personalised to challenge learners of different abilities to make good progress. Staff expectations of what pupils can do are often not high enough; this equally applies to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. In too many lessons, the pace slows because the teacher gives lengthy explanations or asks too many questions of individuals, which results in other pupils disengaging. Weaker teaching in mathematics is partially caused by a lack of consistent challenges to stretch all pupils.
- The quality of teachers' assessment of pupils is also variable. Whilst, the levelling of pupils' work against national standards in English is accurate, it tends to be too generous in other areas. Marking is not consistently good across all year groups and subjects, most noticeably in mathematics, and pupils are not always given the chance to respond to the feedback given by the teacher.
- Teachers have very strong and positive relationships with their pupils and there is a positive atmosphere for pupils to learn. The 'I can' success criteria help pupils to understand what they need to demonstrate within the lesson and good questioning by teachers prompts pupils to think. Pupils are often given the opportunities to work independently, in pairs and in small groups. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils discussed what makes individuals inspirational. This led to strong debates and contributed well to pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is good. This is because it is systematic, with regular routines, and because of the better matching of tasks to the needs of all pupils. A very large range of resources is available to help pupils apply their reading skills.
- Teaching is good in Reception where a wide range of activities is used to engage and interest pupils. The activities challenge pupils to achieve more, which leads to faster progress being made. There is evidence of better teaching and as a result, the achievement of pupils is

beginning to increase. Marking and feedback are good in Year 3.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school is successful in creating a positive environment within which pupils can learn. Whole-school and class assemblies contribute strongly to pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils enjoy school, as demonstrated by their consistently high attendance. They are very polite, confident and articulate. Pupils have good manners and are very supportive of staff and each other. Their attitude to learning is good as they behave well in lessons and make good contributions. This is even the case in lessons where pupils' achievement requires improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is not outstanding because in some lessons they lose concentration and become fidgety.
- Pupils feel safe and reported that bullying only occasionally occurs. They said that the school deals with any issues quickly. They have a good understanding of what contributes to safe and unsafe practices. Pupils are articulate about how to remain safe when on the internet and the dangers of cyber-bullying.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to make positive contributions to the school. The house system provides healthy competition. The school council makes supportive and valuable suggestions about improving the school. A number of older pupils act as play leaders, supervising younger children and guiding them to play safely and sensibly. Pupils raise money for local and national charities.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leaders, managers and governors have not yet secured consistently good achievement across the school. There are too many variations in the performance of different groups of pupils and subjects and in the quality of teaching, and pupils' achievement overall in Years 2 and 6 declined in 2012. The many changes of staff since the last inspection may have contributed to the variations in pupils' performance.
- The over-generous assessment of pupils' levels of attainment, which has already been identified by the school, distorts the picture of how well different groups of learners are doing. The leadership team is currently tackling the discrimination implied by these variations in performance and promoting better equality of opportunity through targeted interventions.
- The new headteacher has already a very clear understanding of the school's strengths, weaknesses and priorities. Aably assisted by the deputy headteacher, she is introducing initiatives to move the school forward. Tracking systems are in place and the senior leaders utilise this information to review performance and to plan appropriate initiatives and interventions. The revised school development plan is sharply focused on key priorities and the headteacher has outlined clear expectations from the staff and is monitoring the quality of teachers' planning. She is uniting the staff and they are committed to ensuring that the children succeed.
- Many of these strategies are at a stage too early to judge their impact on pupils' achievement, but there are already signs of improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Middle leaders are committed and enthusiastic. Some are newly appointed to their roles and have not yet had the opportunity to exercise their responsibilities fully. For example, some middle leaders have not yet had the chance to observe the learning and achievement of pupils. The leadership in English is strong and evident in the relatively good performance of pupils in English but the leadership of mathematics is less successful.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. A topic approach links subjects and helps build on the knowledge and skills of individual pupils, but there are presently too few opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development is strong. Pupils' work is proudly displayed throughout the school and their achievements are celebrated. Sport is a key strength of the school, with lots of sporting activities, fixtures and successes.

- The local authority has supported the new headteacher, providing consultants to help develop the provision, improve teaching and learning, and focus the school's leadership. For example, the headteacher has swiftly acted on the recommendations of a local authority review of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs by strengthening leadership and redeploying support staff. The impact of these actions is already beginning to improve the progress of these pupils.
- The pupil premium funding has been utilised to support the behaviour and emotional development of children from families with a parent or carer serving overseas in the armed forces. The Red Arrows intervention programme, which includes a dedicated teacher and assistant, focuses on all aspects of these pupils' development, including their academic development, and this is improving their progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, the governing body has not held the school fully accountable for the performance of its pupils. Following the arrival of the new headteacher, the governors have now begun to challenge the school more effectively and they recognise its strengths and weaknesses, especially in relation to other schools. Governors' knowledge and understanding of teaching and pupils' achievement have increased and they have a better command of the school's performance data and how they compare with schools nationally. Governors are linked to specific subjects and/or areas of concern and are developing a greater understanding of the standards of teaching. Governors understand the performance management system and how the performance of teaching staff is aligned to the structure of salaries. They have supported the school by using pupil premium funds to deploy staff in support of children from service families and they are monitoring this group and its achievements. The governing body is undertaking professional development training. Governors have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fully met and effective.

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	123125
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	402136

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Wood
Headteacher	Helen Crolla
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 April 2010
Telephone number	01491 202502
Fax number	01491 201546
Email address	office.3181@benson.oxon.sch.uk

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