

Pells Church of England Primary School

Landport Road, Lewes, BN7 2SU

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Weak teaching in the past has been a major contributor to achievement requiring improvement. Pupils have not completely caught up lost ground.
- Teaching requires improvement as it is not consistently good or better.
- Although most pupils are now making good progress in lessons, attainment of Year 6 pupils remains below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In Year 2 and Year 6 not enough pupils reach the expected levels in national tests.
- A small group of persistently poor attenders keep attendance overall stubbornly below average.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Reception class because teaching is good and the work is well matched to their needs.
- Underachievement has been considerably reduced and attainment continues to rise.
- Governance is good and supports the school well. The governing body is better placed to challenge the school when necessary.
- Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They say they feel very safe in school and enjoy coming to school.
- The leadership of the headteacher remains the key reason for the school improving in a range of activities covering achievement, teaching and behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes. He visited eight lessons.
- Meetings were held with governors, staff, pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed other work of the school, including an assembly, plans for improvement, recent reviews of teaching and other provision, safeguarding information, attendance information, play time and lunchtime arrangements and the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Note was taken of 14 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- Insufficient responses were made to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Gavin Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. It has provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with a much lower-than-average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Hardly any speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs, supported by school action, is above average, as is the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of their special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children of service families, is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is above average.
- The very small size of the year groups, as low as eight pupils, makes comparisons with other schools nationally difficult as one pupil can account for over 12% of the results of national tests.
- In 2012, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, an improvement on the previous year.
- In September 2009 the school was placed in special measures. Following an inspection in January 2012 it was removed from this category but still needed significant improvement for achievement. The Ofsted monitoring visit in September 2012 noted that the school was making good progress against the issues for improvement.
- There have been two changes in the teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- Pupils are educated onsite. There is no regular, alternative provision elsewhere.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that good teaching becomes outstanding and eliminate teaching that requires improvement by:
 - ensuring that feedback and marking help pupils improve their work and that they are given opportunities to respond to marking more regularly
 - teachers explaining more clearly to pupils what they should achieve and what good learning looks like
 - checking that teachers use questioning in lessons more consistently to see how well pupils are learning, then make changes to their planned teaching where necessary.
- Accelerate progress for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - encouraging more regular reading at home and a wider range of reading in school
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to talk about writing in order to enrich their vocabulary prior to writing

- helping pupils apply their improving skills in mathematics in real-life problem solving and investigations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In spite of term-on-term improvements, not enough pupils reach the expected levels by the end of Year 6. Nevertheless, this is an improving school. For example, the school did not meet the floor standard in 2011 but did so in 2012. Pupils' current work indicates that this improvement is being sustained.
- Lesson observations show that pupils often make good progress in lessons. However, there is not yet enough consistently good teaching so that all gaps in knowledge, understanding and skills are being remedied. Gaps in pupils' knowledge make attaining Level 5 even more difficult, although more-able pupils are also closing this gap with pupils nationally.
- Children enter school with skills that are generally well below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language, literacy and mathematical development.
- Pupils do well, in both Reception and Year 1, in developing phonic skills (the links between letters and the sounds they make). In the recent national reading checks on phonics they were above average.
- In the most recent national tests, pupils in Year 6 were edging closer still to the national average. The school's own information, together with evidence from the inspection, suggest that pupils in Year 2 are on track to gain better results in reading, writing and mathematics, putting them firmly at average levels. In Year 6 pupils are on track to attain results slightly improved at Level 4 for writing and mathematics, with some improvements likely by pupils at Level 5.
- In reading, pupils are making good progress from low starting points. They use their phonic skills well and are getting more support from home. Where support is given, pupils often make good progress. They read regularly in school but sometimes do not read widely enough, including non-fiction books. Too few pupils reach the higher levels in reading.
- In writing, pupils are given a wide range of writing opportunities in literacy lessons and in topic work or 'learning journeys'. There are good examples in the 'Dragonology' topic and in the re-writing of the story of the 'Porpoise and the Kangaroo' in Years 5/6. Pupils make accelerated progress in their writing when they can discuss the themes and talk to partners about 'Wow' vocabulary sharing starting sentences. In this way they pick up further ideas or 'Magpie' elements to include in their own work. This does not happen often enough.
- In mathematics, pupils are making up for a range of calculation skills not learned previously. They are doing this well, but are not given enough opportunities to put these into practice in practical problem solving using real-life examples.
- The gaps between pupils at Pells and pupils nationally in both English and mathematics are narrowing on a term-by-term basis, as more successful teaching claws back previous underachievement.
- All groups of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are closing the gaps between their attainment in English and mathematics and that of others, as measured by their average point scores at the end of Key Stage 2. This is the result of funds being used for extra teaching assistants, one-to-one teaching and counselling activities. Those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been consistently good enough over time. There are, however, pockets of good and outstanding teaching.
- In the past, support for teachers and regular checks on how well they were teaching were not frequent or accurate enough. This is now much improved.
- Teachers carefully collect information on pupils' progress for six-weekly meetings with the headteacher and inclusion manager to discuss progress. These regular checks ensure that pupils will not be left underachieving. Follow-up meetings note how effective support has been. This is especially important for pupils who enter the school at times other than seen normally.
- Marking is generally good, better in English than in mathematics. However, not all teachers provide feedback on how pupils might improve further. Teachers presume that pupils read their comments and understand how they might make better progress but do not give sufficient opportunities for pupils to respond to comments.
- Teachers forge strong relationships with pupils and create a positive atmosphere for learning. Because of this and the new behaviour recording system, behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary.
- Careful planning in most lessons clarifies aims and describes practical activities adapted to suit the needs of all pupils. Sometimes teachers do not clarify how work is to be carried out by giving pupils examples before they begin. They do not show pupils clearly enough what good work looks like.
- Sometimes, teachers do not question widely enough to ensure that all groups are making sufficient progress during the lesson.
- Year 5 and Year 6 class is divided three mornings per week, so that pupils can be taught in separate year groups more appropriately. This is beginning to have a positive effect on progress.
- Specialist teaching enriches the work of the school in outdoor learning, Spanish and music. Class teachers make good use of a range of subjects to give pupils opportunities to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Support staff are effective. They are particularly supportive of those eligible for the pupil premium or who have special educational needs, ensuring that their needs are met. Pupils who arrive at school at times other than usual are supported well by the school with many making good progress. This support often comes from class assistants or additional support adults.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- Pupils behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn and happy to share their learning with classmates and visitors.
- In a school survey of parental views, a small minority thought that behaviour was not good or dealt with well by the school. The inspection found this was not the case either in lessons or around the school. Scrutiny of behavioural records shows this is the case over time too.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and have a clear understanding of various forms of bullying, although they are at pains to point out that bullying is very rare. They say it is dealt with swiftly when it occurs.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to extend their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Assemblies often relate to Christian festivals and those of other faith groups and cultures. Music and art from around the world are seen and children study the life and language of Spain on a regular basis. Pupils raise money for a range of charities. Pupils get on well together and have clear ideas of how to judge their own behaviour and that of others.

- Pupils take on a range of responsibilities. They set up the hall for assemblies operating the audio-visual system each day. They take an active role in the school council and as play leaders at break times.
- Pupils' attendance has improved year on year from a very low point. It is currently just below the national average; its improvement is due largely to the sustained efforts of both headteacher and governors in making direct contact with parents and sharing rewards and sanctions with them on a regular basis.

The leadership and management

are good

- The headteacher gives strong leadership to the school, through her clear and sustained vision for improvement. After a long period of change and uncertainty in the school, the school is now a much more stable place. This has come from having a permanent and experienced set of class teachers, who together with a strong leadership team give much wanted direction to teaching and achievement. The school has improved from being inadequate at the previous inspection. Although more needs to be done it demonstrates that the school is well placed to improve further.
- The backlog of poor achievement cannot be underestimated. The time taken to repair this damage has been longer than anticipated. However, the strategies put in place are effective and leading to improvement.
- Accurate monitoring of the quality of learning and teaching has led to improvements in both. Understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development has been gained through accurate checks on how well the school is doing. Priorities for development have been noted and have led to a robust improvement plan being put into effect.
- A good system for tracking pupils' progress is used effectively by teachers to help group pupils for learning and ensure work matches their abilities. School leaders use the information to check progress across the school.
- The range of subjects offered to pupils is now more interesting, with subjects linked together more closely with more 'boy appeal' added to some of the topics. For example, 'Dragonology' and 'Dinosaurumpus' are topics that pupils find very exciting. They explore stories, write for different purposes, and learn about art and history.
- The new behaviour policy is effective because all pupils understand it and have a shared language with which to discuss their own behaviour as they complete their own daily behaviour records.
- The setting of targets for teachers through lesson observations is working well; teaching is improving but teachers have not had opportunities to visit other schools to observe outstanding teaching.
- Although middle leaders do not have much time away from their own classes, they check pupils' work, look at planning and discuss progress with colleagues.
- Safeguarding procedures are secure. Checks on staff and health and safety are made systematically. Child-protection systems are good and staff are well trained.
- Teachers are good role models and they promote equality of opportunities well not tolerating any form of discrimination.
- The local authority has supported the school for some time, especially in mathematics. It proposes to continue this support.
- The school has tried successfully to involve parents in the life of the school, with many more parents than expected coming to a mathematics day, for example. There are regular newsletters and advice on the topics children are undertaking.
- **The governance of the school:**
The governing body knows what is happening in the school. It has accomplished this through its

governors' planning day and by attending pupil progress meetings. However, governors do not visit classes to get a first-hand picture of what teaching and learning are like. They recognise this and are considering ways of carrying out such visits. It has looked at its own training needs and where possible has attended courses to help it have a clearer picture of assessment data. It knows about the way the school checks on the quality of teaching and approves how targets are set for teachers linked to pupils' achievement, which might justify increases in salary. It checks how well pupil premium funds are spent and the impact of this work. It is gaining the ability to challenge and support the school on a range of issues. It now holds the school to account well and has played its full part in the improvements since the previous inspection.

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	114536
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	399676

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	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Chartier
Headteacher	Kerri Burns
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 January 2012
Telephone number	01273 476708
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