

# Birchanger Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Birchwood, Birchanger, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 5QL

**Inspection dates** 1–2 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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 requires improvement because it has been too slow in mathematics, especially for the more-able pupils.
- There are still inconsistencies in teaching, including how well tasks are matched to pupils' different abilities and how long teachers talk for.
- Teachers do not use skilful questioning often enough to check pupils' understanding of their work.
- Teachers are not using up-to-date information about pupils to improve their teaching.
- Teachers' marking does not let pupils know how to improve their work. Pupils do not know their targets well enough and there are too few opportunities for pupils to correct their mistakes and to reflect on their next steps in their learning.
- Subject leaders are not sufficiently trained to be able to check closely the progress of pupils in their subjects.
- Leaders and managers are not checking that the one-to-one and small-group teaching that supports reading is helping pupils to do as well as they can.

## The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have worked well together as a team to eradicate inadequate teaching and to keep a sharp focus on pupil progress. This has helped the school to improve.
- Pupils are eager to learn and most engage well in their lessons. Attendance has been above average for the last three years and there are no exclusions.
- The school provides well for the few pupils eligible for the pupil premium and for pupils with special educational needs and so they make good progress, especially in writing.
- Children make good progress in Reception.
- Pupils' achievement in all year groups has improved. In Year 6 almost all pupils are now achieving in line with or above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, all of which were seen with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard them read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), a letter from a member of the governing body and 16 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including nationally published progress information and the school's own data, the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records and documents relating to performance management.

## Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- Since the last inspection the school has experienced major changes. The headteacher was appointed in 2010 and two out of the school's four teachers were appointed this year with two in post during the inspection. The other two will start in September. The school is using a long-term agency teacher to teach Years 5 and 6.
- Very few pupils are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families).
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and those supported at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average compared to national figures.
- The school is a member of two clusters of schools. The Uttlesford Schools' Consortium is made up of 16 member schools while the Uttlesford South West Learning and Development Group is made up of 10.
- The woods around the school have been recreated into a 'forest school' used for outdoor learning.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good by:
  - making sure that teachers do not slow the pace of learning by talking for too long
  - making sure that teachers use well-planned questions to check pupils' understanding at various times during a lesson
  - improving the consistency of marking so that all pupils know their next steps and how to achieve them, and are routinely given opportunities to act on teachers' comments and work on their corrections.
- Improve the rates of progress of pupils by making sure that:
  - teachers use up-to-date assessment information that builds on pupils' knowledge and skills to plan lessons that are set at the right level for pupils, especially the more able
  - pupils have more opportunities to practise their skills in reading, writing and mathematics across all subjects.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by making sure that:
  - the one-to-one and small-group teaching that supports reading is checked frequently to make sure pupils are doing as well as they can
  - the new leaders of subjects are sufficiently trained to be able to check closely the progress of pupils in their subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make rapid progress over time once they leave the Reception class.
- Most children join the Reception Year with skills that are slightly below expected levels for their age. They make good progress with some children reaching above expected levels in all the key areas of learning. However, this rate of progress slows down in Key Stage 1 as attainment in reading, writing and particularly mathematics has remained broadly average at the end of Year 2 for the last three years.
- The proportion of pupils in Key Stage 1 attaining the higher levels in mathematics is too low but is improving. The school, working closely with other external agencies, has introduced additional targeted support so pupils are currently making expected progress and some are doing better.
- Progress in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has been below the national average for the last three years. As a result of carefully targeted teaching and support for underachieving pupils, as well as better leadership, progress is improving for all pupils. The school has also benefited enormously from the intensive support of the local authority mathematics consultant.
- Attainment in reading remains broadly average by the end of Year 6. This is because the one-to-one and small-group teaching for pupils who need additional help in reading is not checked frequently enough to make sure pupils are doing as well as they can.
- Rates of progress are improving in Year 6 this year and some pupils are exceeding the expected progress in writing. A significant improvement in the numbers of pupils securing the higher levels in both English and mathematics was also seen in 2012. However, this more positive trend is not yet happening across all year groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the extra support they receive from additional adults who understand their particular learning needs. This helps them to make similar progress to their peers.
- There were too few pupils eligible for the pupil premium in 2012 to comment on their attainment. The small number of pupils on free school meals have made good progress in mathematics this year. The pupil-premium funding was used mainly to buy in a specialist mathematics one-to-one teacher to support targeted pupils and to improve the confidence of additional adults who support the teaching of mathematics. Consequently these pupils have made good progress in mathematics this year.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as its quality is too inconsistent. As a result, rates of progress are not fast enough for too many pupils. Too many lessons do not provide opportunities for pupils to play an active role in their learning because teachers talk for too long.
- Pupils do not know their targets well enough. In the best lessons, pupils are provided with clear and specific aims which set out what they have to do to reach their next learning levels, but these are not routinely referred to when work is marked, or when it is planned.

- In most lessons the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to correct their mistakes and reflect on how they could improve. Teachers' guidance often lacks precision. This is especially so for writing in Years 5 and 6.
- Progress is not checked well enough during lessons so tasks can be adjusted accordingly. This is because teachers are not using skilful questioning skills to check progress. In a good mathematics lesson the teacher directed questions to groups of pupils based on their ability so that all pupils were challenged. This was not typical of all lessons.
- Reading is increasingly well taught in Key Stage 1 and pupils are encouraged to read widely. For example in Year 2 there are good opportunities for pupils to read and talk about books they are reading with other adults as well as their teacher. The school has recently started to tackle weaknesses in the teaching of phonics.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers use a range of strategies that accurately meet the needs of all pupils, especially pupils who have special educational needs and pupils eligible for the pupil premium so that all groups of pupils make progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. In one Reception lesson, the teacher working collaboratively with other staff from an external agency had skilfully structured the outdoor learning activities so that pupils could progress in their speaking and listening as well as social skills. For example, pupils could describe in detail the colours of new spring flowers to each other and to adults.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved significantly because pupils who are falling behind are given effective additional support and so gaps in achievement are narrowing. For example, in a good one-to-one mathematics lesson the teacher effectively built on the pupil's knowledge of addition step-by-step to steadily improve the pupil's problem-solving skills.

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

- Almost all of the pupils consistently behave well in lessons even when work set fails to challenge them sufficiently. They work diligently to complete tasks and always do their best. They listen well and engage in tasks and activities. Lessons are rarely interrupted and attitudes to learning are typically good.
  - Pupils have good social skills. Most are confident speakers and engage articulately in conversation with adults and other pupils. Pupils are generally respectful of adults and each other. They are polite and courteous to visitors. They are taught how to manage their emotions in particular lessons designed for the purpose such as religious education. This approach, based on the school's Christian values, has been particularly successful in teaching pupils how to manage their behaviour in a confrontation.
  - Evidence gathered during this inspection showed that incidences of bullying are infrequent and dealt with swiftly. Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying but say it is not a problem and that they feel safe. A large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View feel that bullying is managed well.
  - Pupils say that the good behaviour that inspectors saw in class is typical. They reported that they get on well with each other and they confirm that the playground is well supervised. They
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say they enjoy school. Attendance has been above average for the last three years and there have been no exclusions for several years.

- Pupils work very well together. They work purposefully in Year 6 to create a half-termly newsletter called the 'Student Voice'. Pupils themselves through their selected activities, including fund raising, are promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination in the school.
- Regular assemblies are used successfully to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their impact is felt in the pupils' respect for diversity and how well they treat one another.

## The leadership and management

## requires improvement

- Subject leaders do not hold the staff to account sufficiently to make sure that planning for lessons takes account of updated assessment information. As a result, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain.
- The curriculum meets the pupils' needs well and there is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities provided through collaboration with outside agencies. An example is the outdoor learning in the 'forest school' which promotes the learning of pupils beyond the classroom. This excellent resource is used by all year groups to promote deeper and more reflective learning. However, there is too little opportunity for pupils to solve open-ended problems, write in-depth or apply what they are learning in English or mathematics across different subjects.
- Parents and carers who responded to Parent View say they are happy with the school. The headteacher's 'open door' policy and workshops within the cluster of schools are examples of how the school engages with them. However, a very small minority of parents and carers feel they would like increased opportunities to find out more about the progress of their children.
- Training opportunities for staff are linked to the management of their performance and are improving the quality of teaching strongly. The headteacher and governors have worked well as a team to improve the school's systems for managing staff performance. Staff are held to account for improving the quality of their teaching. This has led to the eradication of inadequate teaching.
- Processes for checking that pupils' progress is rigorous, robust and accurate have been developed in the last year. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those eligible for the pupil premium, have now been given appropriate and demanding end of key stage targets.
- The school's knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses is robust and there is a suitably focused action plan to tackle areas requiring improvement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Following on from the previous inspection, the local authority has provided intensive support for the school, especially in improving teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body undertake relevant training and a specific member of the governing body has the responsibility of keeping training updates under constant review.

Governors are now getting more involved with checking the school's effectiveness and have contributed to the recruitment of new teachers. They know about the quality of teaching, what the school is doing to reward good teaching and how it is tackling any underperformance. They keep a close eye on the pupil-premium funding and know how it is being used. They also know that eligible pupils have made better progress in writing and mathematics than in reading.

- The governing body understands what the school is doing well and where it could do better. They are clear about pupils' achievement. Governors have made sure that the school's self-evaluation and planned actions are linked to staff training and have developed strong links with parents to find out their views about the school.
  - All statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding, are met. The governing body holds the school to account for managing its finances and are currently exploring processes that will ensure that pay is closely aligned to teachers' performance.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115127
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	405566

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Haggerwoor-Bullen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shirley Warbrick
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 – 13 October 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 812362
<b>Fax number</b>	01279 817061
<b>Email address</b>	head@birchanger.essex.sch.uk

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