

St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Hunter's Chase, South Godstone, Surrey, RH9 8HR

Inspection dates 2–3 May 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

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it is not consistently good across the school.
- Teaching is not as strong in Key Stage 1 as it is in the rest of the school. This means that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make slower progress than elsewhere.
- In Years 1 and 2, teaching is not always pitched at the right level for all pupils. Work is sometimes too hard or too easy for some.
- Letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) are not taught systematically enough in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Teachers who are in charge of subjects have not had opportunities to visit lessons so that they can play a larger part in improving teaching where inconsistencies still exist.

The school has the following strengths

- A relentless drive for improvement over the last year that has been well led by the new headteacher, as well as the governing body, is ensuring a rapid pace to development. Consequently, both pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching are improving quickly, especially in Key Stage 2.
- Leaders are identifying the most important priorities and are doing the right things to improve pupils' progress in Key Stage 1, although this has been slowed by staff absence.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They learn new skills quickly and are very independent.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 rose sharply last year and is now broadly average. Pupils are now making good progress in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is particularly strong.
- There is good provision for pupils in the Visually Impaired Resource Unit. They are supported well by skilled staff and make good progress.
- Pupils behave well, thoroughly enjoy school and feel safe. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons, with pupils working hard and showing great sensitivity to the needs of others.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 17 lessons, of which around half were joint observations with the headteacher or other senior managers. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 30 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors also talked to some parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, heard pupils read, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress, planning and monitoring documents, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding information.
- The inspectors analysed 17 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lily Evans

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

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Reception class.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school includes a Visually Impaired Resource Unit for up to 12 pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding given to the school for children known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is below average. In this school, most eligible pupils are in the first of these categories.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- An after-school club and a pre-school group that use a classroom in the school are managed by external providers and were not inspected. The latest reports can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012. Three other new teachers also joined the school at that time. At the time of the inspection, Year 2 was being taken by a temporary teacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching to good in Key Stage 1 by ensuring that teachers plan work at the right level for all pupils so that none find it too easy or too hard
- Improve the way that phonics is taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 by providing additional training for staff and ensuring that skills are introduced systematically to all pupils whatever their prior learning.
- Give teachers in charge of subjects more chance to visit lessons so that they can play a bigger part in ironing out the remaining inconsistencies in teaching.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because progress is not yet consistently good. Despite recent improvements, there are still variations in the rates of progress between key stages. In Key Stage 1, pupils do not always make enough progress, and although attainment at the end of Year 2 is rising, it is doing so less rapidly than in Key Stage 2. This is because pupils do not make enough progress in lessons when work does not meet their needs well enough.
- In the Year 1 phonic screenings in 2012, the proportion reaching the expected levels was below average. Not all pupils develop a secure knowledge of letters and sounds quickly. This slows the pace at which reading and writing skills in Key Stage 1 improve. Less-able pupils in Key Stage 1 have limited phonics knowledge and they struggle to read or spell unknown words without adult help.
- Pupils make better progress in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 and their attainment by the end of Year 6 rose sharply in national tests in 2012 to broadly average levels. The current Year 6 is already working at higher levels and is set to maintain the improved trend this year. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are becoming increasingly confident writers and they read well. In mathematics, they think like mathematicians and show good skills when faced with challenging problems.
- Children quickly improve skills in the Reception class, benefiting from good teaching and an interesting curriculum. In the current year, when children started school, most were working at the expected levels for their age. They make good progress, especially in personal and social development where there are many opportunities for children to work independently.
- The school successfully closes the gap between the attainment of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium and others. Indeed, in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2012, the very small number of eligible pupils was attaining about a term ahead of their classmates in English and mathematics. Focused support is being given to eligible pupils in the current year to help all fulfil their potential.
- Visually impaired pupils are supported extremely well and make good progress all of the time. Their attainment is higher than pupils with similar needs nationally. Other disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same uneven progress as others, doing better in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is more good teaching than at the time of the previous inspection. However, it still requires improvement because, in Key Stage 1, teachers do not always make enough use of assessment information to plan work that meets the needs of all pupils. On occasions, pupils complete the same piece of work whatever their starting points and when this happens some find it too easy and finish quickly, whilst others struggle to complete it without extra help.
- The teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is not systematic enough. Some teachers lack confidence in the teaching of phonics. Too often, pupils are taught in large groups, with all learning the same sound and teachers not taking enough account of what pupils already know.
- There is good teaching in many parts of the school. In the Reception class, adults plan exciting and engaging activities that make good use of the very well-resourced outdoor area. Children are given good opportunities to select for themselves where they are going to work. When this happens, adults intervene at just the right time to move learning on quickly.
- In Key Stage 2, and especially in Years 5 and 6, pupils are challenged well because teachers have high expectations. Skills improve quickly and little time is wasted as pupils are always clear about what they are learning and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers in the Visually Impaired Resource Unit have good knowledge of how to support their pupils and they teach them well. The checking of pupils' progress is particularly thorough and

this ensures that teachers are always clear about what to teach next.

- Across the school, teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning. They provide sensitive support to pupils and when working with groups outside lessons help them to learn quickly.
- In all classes, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Recent improvements in planning mean that teachers are now giving pupils more opportunities than in the past to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes towards learning are key improvements since the previous inspection. As one pupil said, 'We are learning better now because we know that we have to work hard all of the time.'
- Across the school, pupils are polite and courteous. They try hard in lessons, although there are a few occasions when they do not pay enough attention to the teacher, especially when expected to sit for too long at the start of lessons. Nonetheless, pupils are keen to do their best and show good independence in lessons, especially in Years 5 and 6, where teachers expect them to talk about their learning and to explain what they are doing.
- Senior leaders have introduced effective systems for promoting good behaviour. These are applied consistently by staff and pupils feel that this has helped to improve behaviour. Skilled support from learning mentors and teaching assistants is effective in helping pupils with behavioural difficulties to improve their social skills.
- Rates of attendance are rising and are now above average. This reflects pupils' great enjoyment of school. The many smiling faces seen in school are a testament to the good relationships that exist between adults and pupils.
- The school tackles discrimination very effectively. Pupils are kind and caring and play together happily. Visually impaired pupils take a full part in activities and are supported sensitively by their classmates.
- Pupils feel safe and are confident that problems are tackled quickly. There is very little bullying or 'falling out', but pupils know who to turn to if it does occur. They like having 'Worry Boxes' in classes, although they say they rarely use them because, 'We are happy most of the time.' Parents agree with this view and also confirm that behaviour is typically good.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has improved rapidly over the last year. The new headteacher and other senior leaders are setting high expectations for what every pupil and teacher can achieve. Development planning is perceptive and identifies clearly the most important priorities.
- The local authority and diocese have given good support to secure the needed improvements. Support identified in the local authority's statement of action (a plan drawn up after the previous inspection to show how the school would be supported) has been implemented and has been an important factor in the rapid rate of recent improvement.
- Leaders are not willing to accept second best and, while the impact of their work is less strong in Key Stage 1 than in the rest of the school due in part to staff absences, the positive impact of their work can be seen in rising attainment, improving teaching and pupils' good behaviour.
- The headteacher has tackled weaknesses in teaching with rigour. Teachers are given good support to help them improve. Leaders who are in charge of subjects are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about their subjects, although they do not yet have enough opportunities to visit lessons so that they too can help to improve teaching further.
- Leaders make good use of data to identify pupils who may be falling behind, including those who are eligible for the pupil premium. They give them timely support to help them catch up. Good use is made of the pupil premium to employ additional staff to support eligible pupils in small groups or individually. Consequently, these pupils do at least as well as others.

- The curriculum (subjects and the topics taught) is much improved over the last year. There are now stronger links between subjects than in the past. Pupils like this because, 'It makes work more enjoyable.' The curriculum is not yet good due to weaknesses in the way that phonics is taught.
- There is a successful focus in lessons on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Recent work on 'resilience' and 'resourcefulness' are reflected increasingly in pupils' ability to persevere without fear of failure.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is knowledgeable about the school and has made good use of training to improve its skills. Its challenge and support to other school leaders have been instrumental in recent improvements. Governors make good use of data to check how well pupils are doing and this means that there is a good understanding of how well the school is performing in comparison to others both locally and nationally. Governors check the quality of teaching closely and ensure that only good performance is rewarded financially. Good attention is paid to the use of the pupil premium and whether it is closing the gap between the attainment of eligible pupils and others. Governors are fully involved in deciding how funding should be used, and they evaluate its success thoroughly. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	125187
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	408846

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	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Gooch
Headteacher	Amanda Blackburn
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 May 2012
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