

Benenden Church of England Primary School

The Village Green, Benenden, Cranbrook, TN17 4DN

Inspection dates 16–17 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Some pupils do not make good progress in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching across year groups is too variable.
- Some lessons move at a slow pace and the tasks given to pupils, especially the more able, lack challenge and often do not extend their abilities.
- Some teachers do not always check pupils' understanding frequently enough and pupils do not always receive suitable guidance to improve their work.
- Governors do not effectively challenge leaders and hold them to account for pupils making good progress, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils are often not given the time to read and respond to teachers' comments in their books. As a result, they are not always sure about how to improve their work and this leads to variable progress, especially in mathematics.
- Leaders do not use information on pupils' achievement rigorously and effectively when checking the quality of teaching.
- Checking carried out by subject leaders lacks rigour as they mostly focus on whether the work is matched to pupils' age rather than their abilities.

The school has the following strengths

- Although the buildings are old and confining, the headteacher and co-headteacher have worked hard to create a friendly, safe and pleasant learning environment.
- Pupils are polite and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing.
- The range of subjects and activities provided for pupils, together with daily assemblies, promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 14 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with the headteacher and co-headteacher. The inspection team also spent time in the Early Years Foundation Stage observing the quality of teaching and support that is given to children in the Reception class.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, co-headteacher and local authority’s school improvement advisor to discuss the the school’s information on pupils’ progress.
- Meetings were held with other senior leaders and staff and with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered parents’ and carers’ views of the school through informal discussions at the start and end of the first day of the inspection and by considering the 63 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). There were also discussions with pupils and staff. The inspectors had lunch with the pupils and listened to some of them read.
- Inspectors examined a number of documents, including the school’s own information on pupils’ current progress, and planning and monitoring documentation. They looked at attendance figures and pupils’ work.

Inspection team

Janice Williams, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Cutler

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Approximately 11% of the pupils are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked-after children, those eligible for free school meals and the children of service families. This figure is well below the national average. There are no pupils that are looked after by the local authority or from service families.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school buildings are very old and the outdoor space is very confining for pupils to play. Because of the limited space, the Reception classroom and the canteen are located in a separate building across the road. A new building programme has been approved and governors are working closely with the local authority to secure funding for the construction to commence.
- On day two of the inspection, the Year 6 pupils went on a residential trip.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching in all key stages, so that it is at least good, by:
 - ensuring lessons move at a brisker pace and plans are adjusted regularly so that tasks are at the right level of difficulty for all pupils
 - ensuring that pupils regularly use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects to consolidate their understanding and improve the quality of their work
 - providing feedback to pupils that is more helpful and clearly identifies the next steps in learning
 - ensuring that pupils are always given the time to respond to teachers' feedback so as to strengthen their knowledge and their understanding of how to improve.
- Accelerate pupils' progress, especially in mathematics by:
 - providing more challenging work that extends the abilities of all pupils, especially the more able
 - regularly checking pupils' understanding during lessons.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - using information on pupils' progress more rigorously to check the quality of teaching and effectively follow-up areas identified for improvement
 - making sure subject leaders frequently check teachers' planning and the work in pupils' books to make sure that the work set is suitably matched to pupils' abilities and skills
 - making sure that governors effectively challenge leaders and hold them to account for all groups of pupils making accelerated progress. An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because some pupils do not always make good progress, especially in mathematics.
- Children enter Reception with skills that are at age-related expectations in most learning areas. They make mostly steady progress, although there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, especially in sessions on the blending and decoding of letters and sounds. Sometimes lessons lack pace and challenge and as a result, children make variable progress. Children enter Year 1 with attainment that is similar to the national average.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is higher than the national average in all subjects. Their attainment in the Year 1 check on the linking of letters and sounds was above the national average.
- Attainment is above average by the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have made good progress, especially in English. However, progress in mathematics is slower and some pupils do not achieve well in this subject. The rates at which pupils progress varies because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Most pupils make good progress in reading because the teaching of reading skills, including blending and decoding, is consistently better in Key Stages 1 and 2. Younger pupils are very confident in identifying and accurately pronouncing sounds that blend together, while the older pupils read with fluency and clearly understand the context of what they read. They independently select challenging texts and most read often at home.
- Pupils make mostly good progress in writing because teachers provide them with many opportunities to write extended creative pieces that are interesting. In most classes, pupils use a range of punctuation to enhance the quality of their writing.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is not as strong as in reading because they are sometimes not given enough opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Pupils make variable progress in mathematics because teachers do not always check their understanding frequently enough and provide challenging work that extends their abilities. In some classes, more able pupils do similar work to their peers and their own assessments show that the work is often too easy for them.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make variable progress to their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. In a few lessons, misconceptions are not quickly addressed by the teacher if there is no additional support present.
- In 2012, the Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attained similarly to their peers in English but were approximately a term behind their peers in mathematics. The gap is narrowing faster in reading than in writing. As a result, they attained higher than their peers in reading.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not good because too many lessons move at a slow pace and teachers do not regularly check pupils' understanding. Across the school, the quality of teaching across year groups is inconsistent.
- In different subjects, pupils are not often challenged to use their knowledge of phonics (linking of letters and sounds) accurately. For example, in Year 1 numeracy lessons, pupils work on creating graphs and they use the skills that they have learnt in phonics to spell different colours. However, staff do not always take the opportunity to strengthen pupils' understanding of sound blends. Consequently, pupils write some words incorrectly and this is sometimes not addressed

by the teacher.

- The teaching of mathematics is too variable. Although work is explained clearly in some classes, in others, especially the younger year groups, teachers do not always explain concepts clearly enough for pupils to understand. Some teachers do not always use key words in mathematics, or challenge pupils to use their literacy skills more effectively in giving directions. As a result, pupils' learning slows.
- At times, pupils are asked to do many repetitive problems before their understanding is checked by the teacher. Consequently, some pupils, especially the more able, are often not challenged to extend and apply their knowledge and skills by being moved on to new problems.
- In the good lessons seen, pupils were engaged in their learning and enjoyed a variety of activities that sustained their interests. There were regular explanations of what pupils needed to achieve to be successful and they effectively evaluated their own learning. Consequently, they make good progress.
- Comments from teachers in books do not always provide enough guidance for pupils to correct or improve their work. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to respond to the comments from their teachers and, as a result, they make variable progress, especially in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are sometimes given good quality support and in some lessons they make more rapid progress than their peers. However, where support is less effective, they achieve less well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well around the school and in most lessons. Occasionally, some become a little restless when the pace of learning is not fast enough.
- There is an inclusive atmosphere where pupils treat each other with respect. During breaks and playtimes, pupils play happily and they utilise every part of their small limited play area by running and playing in a mature and responsible manner. No one feels threatened as they carefully manoeuvre between their peers.
- Pupils are friendly and confident with adults. They have a clear awareness of eating healthily and know how to keep themselves safe while at school, or when walking to school using the 'walking bus'.
- They know how to deal with bullying and confidently identify someone they can confide in if such incidents occur. Pupils say that there are few incidences of bullying but leaders address reported cases appropriately.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Older pupils enjoy being given roles of responsibilities such as 'playground friends' or 'mediators' and carefully observe the 'friendship stop'. They say that pupils without friends or those who are feeling sad can sit on red benches during playtimes and a pupil will then talk or play with them to make sure they feel better.
- They praise the different reward systems that they have and enjoy getting house points and citizenship awards for helping people and being polite. They also discuss with great pride the sportsmanship award and their Eco-School Green Flag award.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe while using the internet and are able to confidently talk about safety rules.
- All the parents and carers interviewed and those who responded to Parent View agreed that their child is happy, safe and well looked after. Most of the parents and carers interviewed agreed that the old buildings and limited space sometimes restrict pupils' access to more physical exercise as the play area is so confining. They welcome the plans for the new school and are happy with the designated location.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school's systems for checking the quality of teaching lack rigour and pupils' achievement in mathematics is too variable.
 - Since the last inspection, leaders have put some strategies in place to improve pupils' progress in mathematics and attendance. Some pupils identified as not making the progress that is expected of them are given one-to-one support to develop their numeracy skills, but this has not yet had enough impact on pupils' achievement. Leaders have not effectively used information on pupils' achievement to check the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics.
 - The school's evaluation of its own work is a little overgenerous because leaders have focused mainly on pupils' achievement during their last year of school and too little attention has been given to making sure that pupils make consistently good progress in all year groups.
 - Leaders' judgements on teaching are sometimes too generous because they often focus on what the teacher is doing rather than what pupils are learning.
 - Subject leaders check teachers' planning and work in pupils' books, but their expectations are sometimes too low as they often check whether the work is suitable for pupils' age rather than their abilities. Consequently, the more able often do not get enough challenging work that extends their abilities.
 - Teachers' performance is linked to their pay and through collaborative work with other nearby schools, as well as with the local authority, there are training opportunities in place for teachers and supporting adults to improve their practice.
 - On the basis of the outcomes from the last inspection, the local authority has provided light-touch support. However, the local authority has provided funding for collaborative work with other schools. As a result, there is now a stronger focus on improving the school.
 - The pupil premium funding has been used to provide one-to-one numeracy tuition, small group support and to assist in paying for the family liaison officer. Consequently, attendance has improved and there is evidence that pupils eligible for this funding are beginning to make better progress.
 - The curriculum has many interesting topics that engage pupils and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Consequently, pupils treat each other with respect. They listen attentively to their peers during 'partner talk' and work well together in teamed activities. Pupils learn about other cultures through assemblies and other subjects. The school has links to a school in Africa and one in Woolwich, which is used well to develop pupils' understanding of life within different communities.
 - The headteacher and the co-headteacher have worked well together to create an inclusive atmosphere to ensure there is no discrimination and where equality of opportunity is given a high priority. Great care is given to pupils to ensure they are happy and safe, and leaders communicate well with parents and carers.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body is very supportive of the school's work. Governors are dedicated to pupils having better accommodation and have worked relentlessly to secure approval for the planning application of the new school. They are aware that pupils' achievement is stronger in English than in mathematics. However, some governors rely too much on information provided for them by the headteachers regarding pupils' progress. They are aware that mathematics is an area for improvement, but have not effectively held leaders to account for accelerating pupils' progress. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching and of the training that teachers receive and they know how performance management is done in the school. They are aware that the pupil premium funding is helping to improve progress in mathematics for some pupils as well as attendance. They make sure 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	118597
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403350

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Harmsworth
Headteacher	Jenny Reich
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 March 2008
Telephone number	01580 240565
Fax number	01580 243112
Email address	headteacher@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

