

The Cowbit St Mary's (Endowed) CofE Primary

Barrier Bank, Cowbit, Spalding, PE12 6AL

Inspection dates 14–15 May 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

- Progress is not consistently good in writing, mathematics and science.
- Teaching is not good enough to secure good achievement overtime. Although it has improved recently, weaknesses still remain which hold back pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is at the right level of difficulty for all groups of pupils.
- More-able pupils do not always reach the levels of which they are capable, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils with opportunities to plan, evaluate and organise their work, especially in science.
- Some teachers responsible for specific areas of the school are at the early stages of developing their leadership skills.
- Governors do not have precise information on how well teachers are performing, so they are not able to contribute more to setting the targets to improve teachers' work.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have stopped pupils underachieving and the decline in attainment has been halted.
- Reading is improving because the school has put effective strategies in place to support pupils, especially for those who need extra help.
- Pupils behave well and have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- The headteacher has quickly identified the school's priorities to improve teaching and achievement. She has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and is applying effective strategies to improve it. Governors give her strong support and are contributing well to the school's improvement.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed parts of six lessons, all of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- She held meetings with the headteacher, literacy, mathematics and special educational needs coordinators, the vice chair and another member of the governing body.
- The inspector looked at work in pupils' books; some pupils read to her and others spoke to her about their experiences at the school.
- The inspector spoke to the local authority representative for the school.
- The inspector took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to several parents and carers.
- She looked at a range of school documentation. This included: the school's self-evaluation, the school's data on pupils' progress, and information relating to safeguarding, behaviour, exclusions and attendance.
- Questionnaires from 10 staff were considered.

Inspection team

Mary Hinds, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller-than-average primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care, is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- More pupils than is typical join or leave the school at other than the usual times.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.
- Following the recent retirement of the previous headteacher, the current headteacher took up post in April 2013. There are new leaders for literacy, mathematics and special educational needs.
- Three out of the four teachers have joined the school since the previous inspection. The Key Stage 2 teacher was absent during the inspection and this class is currently being taught by a temporary teacher in his absence.
- The school has a new governing body since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and improves pupils' rate of progress by making sure that:
 - work is well matched to pupils' different abilities, particularly those who find learning easy
 - pupils' understanding in lessons is regularly reviewed so that the pace of learning is rapid for all pupils
 - each lesson builds on the pupils' previous learning
 - training and support for all staff are tailored to their needs, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing, mathematics and science by:
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to practise the skills they learn in writing and mathematics lessons in other subjects
 - providing pupils with real-life problems to solve and investigate in mathematics and in other subjects and contexts
 - ensuring that pupils plan, evaluate and organise their own work neatly, particularly in science.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders develop a clear understanding of pupils' performance in their areas of responsibility so that they can play a full role in improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement

- governors play a greater part in setting targets for teachers to reach so that their teaching improves
- pupils have a confidential system to communicate their concerns.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils are not making consistently good progress in all lessons, particularly in writing, mathematics and science. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise, refine and extend their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Although all groups of pupils are now making better progress, many pupils are not yet making sufficiently rapid gains in their learning to ensure that they achieve what they are capable of. There are too few more-able pupils attaining the higher levels in both key stages.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills through problem-solving activities in mathematics, or to plan their own work and to be evaluative, particularly in science. Consequently, pupils do not develop these skills well enough. Furthermore, teachers rely too much on work sheets which prevent pupils from thinking about how they will organise their work for themselves. This restricts their learning and progress.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been low in both English and mathematics. More recently, there has been a rise in achievement and more pupils are reaching average attainment levels in some year groups, particularly in reading. This improvement also includes those pupils who join the school other than at the usual times.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding which are below those usually found nationally among this age group. Increasingly, more children are entering Year 1 with broadly average numeracy skills. However, literacy and communication skills remain below average.
- In the phonics check on pupils' understanding of the sounds that letter make, pupils' scores were just above those found nationally in summer 2012. Pupils are now making better progress in reading and, to a lesser extent, in writing because of the new programme to teach phonics and recent training for teachers. Younger pupils are beginning to use the sounds that letters make to help them with their reading.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment. However, the inspection found convincing evidence that the current progress and attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium in most year groups is broadly in line with that of all pupils in both English and mathematics. The school is using the funding appropriately to provide additional resources to support these pupils.
- The attainment of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was, last year, significantly lower than that of similar pupils nationally. Pupils who are currently receiving extra help are making progress in line with all pupils. The school has recently developed a detailed analysis of their needs so that interventions providing them with extra help are better targeted.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there is some good teaching, too much requires improvement or has, in the past, been inadequate. While teaching has recently improved considerably, this has yet to have a marked impact on pupils' learning and progress overtime.

- Too often pupils complete the same work, which does not challenge more-able pupils or enable them to work at a faster pace. For example, all pupils completed the same activity when they had to identify lines of symmetry in a mathematics lesson.
- Progress slows when teachers do not check pupils' understanding in lessons and adapt the activity if some pupils are finding the task too easy. In a literacy lesson, for example, all pupils were asked to use speech marks in their writing. More-able pupils quickly completed this task but this was not picked up by the teacher. As a result, the pupils' learning was not moved on to more demanding work.
- Teachers do not always use their assessments of progress and achievement to ensure that pupils' work builds on their previous learning.
- On occasions, pupils are engaged in activities that do not allow them to think problems through for themselves, to investigate in real-life situations or to plan and organise their work. Some teachers rely too much on work sheets where tasks are too prescribed to give pupils opportunity to work independently at their own level of ability. Consequently, pupils are not encouraged enough to take care about their presentation of their work and prevents them from planning and organising their work, particularly in science.
- Where teaching has improved, teachers have good subject knowledge and have clear expectations of what pupils can achieve. They secure high levels of engagement and confidence from pupils. They carefully build on previous learning, and ask probing questions to gauge pupils' understanding and reshape tasks. They move learning on at a rapid pace and, consequently, pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding quickly and enthusiastically.
- A new marking policy has been implemented and is beginning to improve the quality of feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils understand the marking system and say that it helps them improve their work.
- The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage successfully settles the children into the routines of school life. The teaching of early knowledge of letters and sounds lays a secure foundation for later reading. Staff have worked hard to ensure that both the outside and inside learning areas are exciting and support the children's learning. The school has clear plans to improve children's early literacy and communication skills, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of these.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Discussions with pupils indicate that they value their school and enjoy all that the school offers. Pupils work well together. They respect each other's opinions and ideas. They are well mannered and very courteous.
- Pupils usually concentrate well on the tasks they are given, even if they find them too hard or easy. When given the opportunity, pupils are able to work independently.
- Pupils report that behaviour is good. Parents and staff agree. Pupils get on well together, and they say they really appreciate the new rewards system, especially when their efforts are recognised, such as 'Good to be Green'.

- The recent review of the school's values took full account of the pupils' view. Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities such as school councillors, peer mediators and health-and-safety officers. These opportunities contribute considerably to their social and moral development.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Bullying is rare. Pupils are made very aware of the impact of unkind name-calling and say that on the rare occasions this happens the school promptly deals with it. Although pupils have every confidence that adults deal with their concerns, several expressed a desire to have a 'worry box' to ensure confidentiality. Leaders have not yet made this facility available.
- Attendance is, currently, broadly average. Attendance statistics are often disproportionately affected by the very small numbers in each year group. For example, individual pupils sometimes suffer illnesses which keep them out of school for a considerable time, or have sustained absence because of family issues.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher has quickly identified teachers who have the relevant expertise to take on additional leadership responsibilities. Nevertheless, leadership and management require improvement because these teachers are new and currently do not have an overview of performance in their specific areas. They have yet to secure improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher has, over a very short period of time, secured strong commitment from governors and staff to her drive and determination to achieve excellence. Teamwork, including coaching and mentoring of staff, is central to the school's upward trend. She has wasted no time in monitoring the work of the school, including the quality of teaching, and has completed an in-depth analysis of pupils' performance. She has identified the right priorities and has a clear improvement plan to tackle these.
- The headteacher has strengthened the targets set for teachers' performance. Teachers' performance is assessed and rewarded against how much progress pupils make and how well the teachers fulfil their different management responsibilities. Weak teaching has been eradicated.
- Staff training and support have focused almost exclusively on literacy. As a consequence, all staff are more confident teaching this subject. There has been no recent up-to-date training for mathematics.
- Pupils' progress is checked regularly. The headteacher has planned meetings to discuss every individual pupil's progress to ensure that all teachers are held fully to account for the progress their pupils make.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly appreciate its caring attitudes and the fact that the headteacher meets and greets them and their children individually every day. They say that she always makes time for them and that communication is excellent. The headteacher has quickly developed a very strong partnership with parents.

- The curriculum provides sufficient learning opportunities for pupils. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, especially through assemblies, which are regularly taken in church. However, there are too few links between subjects to develop and extend key writing and mathematical skills. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative skills and to work independently in science.

- The local authority has increased its support for the school following the appointment of the new headteacher. The local authority officer provides good advice on specific issues identified by the headteacher and governors. Previously, it has provided training for governors and funding to support school improvement through a collaborative partnership with other local schools.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have improved their understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. The steering group is heavily involved in self-evaluation and planning for improvement. As a result of being better informed, particularly in relation to pupils' performance data, they are now challenging and ask probing questions about how well pupils are performing in relation to the national average.
 - They are totally committed to the principle that teaching has to be good or better. Their appointment of the headteacher was a good choice and has strengthened the teaching team – as the headteacher has considerable experience of developing teaching and learning in her previous role as a local authority officer with responsibility for this area. Governors are currently setting challenging targets for her performance, and are supporting her well in tackling underperformance in the school.
 - Although they agree that only good teaching is rewarded with an increase in pay, they do not have enough knowledge about how well individual teachers' perform, including setting targets for each teacher to ensure classroom practice improves.
 - Governors manage the school's finances competently and have a good understanding of how well the pupil premium supports good progress for specific pupils.
 - They ensure that all necessary steps are taken to keep the pupils safe.

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	120611
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	401952

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Start
Headteacher	Hilary Brewster
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2009
Telephone number	01406 380369
Fax number	N/A
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