

St Mary's Church of England School

Keen Close, Fairford Leys, HP19 7WF

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Achievement requires improvement because a significant minority of pupils do not make good progress in Key Stage 2, and particularly boys in writing.
- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good across all classes, and particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Sometimes, teachers' expectations are not high enough and the pace of learning swift enough. Pupils who can do harder work are often given the same tasks as everyone else.
- In some lessons, teachers do not ensure that their explanations about what is to be done are clear and understood and do not check often enough how well pupils are learning.
- In marking pupils' books, teachers do not always provide clear guidance on what pupils should do to improve the quality of their work
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise skills learnt in literacy and numeracy in all subjects across the curriculum.
- Behaviour requires improvement. Pupils do not take enough care over presentation of their work and writing in all subjects. They become distracted or 'switched off' in some lessons.
- Systems for monitoring incidents of misbehaviour or bullying are not robust. There are improvements under the new leadership, but a few parents and carers still expressed concerns. The school has not as yet developed a clear e-safety policy.
- Turbulence in staffing and previous changes of leadership led to a dip in the school's effectiveness since the previous inspection. Some staff with responsibilities are new in post or not yet playing a full part in leading school improvement.

The school has the following strengths.

- The new headteacher, supported by governors, is making a strong impact. Work is focused on the correct priorities. This is already improving the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs usually make good progress because they are well supported.
- Teaching and achievement are mostly good in classes for younger pupils. The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is particularly strong.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, visiting 16 lessons or parts of lessons. Two of these were jointly observed with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed an assembly.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined 92 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire. They also took account of the outcomes of the staff questionnaire, a recent school questionnaire for parents and talked to parents in the playground.
- Discussions were held with representatives from the local authority's advisory service, two members of the governing body and members of the school staff.
- Inspectors examined pupils' progress data and other school documentation, including safeguarding information.
- A formal discussion was held with a group of pupils and inspectors also talked to pupils at break and lunchtimes as well as in lessons.

Inspection team

Barbara Firth, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Smith	Additional Inspector
Janet Watson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above average-sized primary school with provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in two Reception classes.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups is well below that seen nationally, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well below average. This is extra money provided to schools by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families, and children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2012 following a period of instability within the leadership and staffing of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all consistently good or better, and in particular in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations for all pupils
 - when planning lessons, teachers provide work that extends and challenges the abilities of all pupils, especially that of the more able
 - teachers demonstrate clearly the skills pupils are expected learn and ensure their explanations are clear and understood
 - teachers check pupils' understanding more regularly throughout lessons so that teachers can amend and adjust their teaching to ensure that the pace of learning is brisk for all pupils
 - teachers' feedback in their marking provides clear next steps in learning and that pupils are expected to respond and practise their skills to bring about rapid improvements in their work.
- Improve the rates of progress in writing, especially for boys, by:
 - expecting better presentation and accurate spelling and punctuation in writing in all subjects
 - giving pupils as many opportunities as possible to write at length in a range of subjects and topics across the curriculum.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - developing the skills of all leaders with particular responsibilities, including those that are new, in supporting teachers to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - developing a clear policy for e-safety and improving systems of recording incidents of bullying and checking the impact of actions for dealing with them
 - have a clear curriculum overview of what is being taught and develop explicit links across all subjects with literacy and numeracy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school and particularly in writing in Key Stage 2.
- Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills at expected levels for their age. By the end of Year 6, attainment is uneven. It requires improvement in English.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 6, especially in writing. This is because teachers do not always expect enough of more-able pupils or plan work to challenge them to think hard. The presentation of pupils' written work, particularly boys', is often poor. Writing in other subjects is often below the standard of written work in literacy lessons, with spelling and punctuation errors left unchecked.
- In mathematics, standards are above average. Pupils make good progress in mathematics because teaching involves pupils more actively in their learning and relates problem solving to everyday experiences.
- As a result of good teaching, including a wide range of well-focused play-based activities, children make good progress in Reception. Regular and efficient teaching of letters and sounds gives them a secure grounding in their basic writing and reading skills. A strong focus on speaking and listening ensures that good progress is also made in language skills. This continues in Key Stage 1. Standards are significantly above the national average by the end of Year 2.
- Well-focused interventions enable pupils to make good progress in reading. Increasing proportions of pupils attain higher levels both at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy reading, showing confidence and enthusiasm. Younger pupils are able to link letters to the sounds they make, and make reasonable attempts at unknown words. As a consequence of good strategies to help them, pupils who did not attain the expected standard in the government's phonic screening check in 2012 at age six have made good progress and are on track to attain at least average standards at the end of Year 2.
- Rates of progress of different groups of pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are improving because of well-targeted support and these groups achieve at least as well as their peers.
- In 2012, attainment for pupils supported through pupil premium funding, because of their eligibility for free school meals, was around four months behind their peers in English and the same in mathematics at the end of Year 6. Currently, pupils across the school supported through this funding are now making at least the same progress as their peers. They are supported through additional help in the classroom, small group intervention and financial support with enrichment activities.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good and has not been over time, especially in Key Stage 2. As a consequence, not enough pupils make consistently good progress in all subjects and in all year groups during their time in the school.
- Teaching does not always challenge more-able pupils. When planning lessons, teachers do not always make the best use of the information provided for them about pupils' progress and, consequently, more-able pupils sometimes waste time completing work that they already can do before getting on to more challenging tasks. For these pupils, the pace of learning and the progress they make slow.
- Where teaching is good, teachers ask skilful and timely questions to check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson and then adapt their teaching to fill any gaps in learning, but this is not the case in all lessons.

- When teachers explain clearly what the learning intention of the lesson is and what skills the pupils will be developing, pupils make good progress. However, in some lessons, the learning intentions are unclear, and in some cases, confusing; teachers do not demonstrate well enough what pupils are expected to do and, as a result, they do not make good progress.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' writing are not high enough and pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length in subjects other than literacy. Consequently, pupils, and especially boys in Key Stage 2, do not take enough care when presenting their work.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of marking across classes. Opportunities to correct misspelt words and punctuation errors are missed, and because pupils are not routinely expected to respond to the advice their teachers give them they do not learn from their mistakes.
- Disabled pupils or those with special educational needs usually make good progress as a result of effective small group interventions and well-targeted support in class. For example, in one mathematics lesson, the teaching assistant mirrored the teacher's introduction with a targeted group of lower ability pupils, using content that was more appropriate to their level of understanding. Provision for more-able pupils is less effective and interventions are less evident.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- A minority of pupils become fidgety and distracted when tasks are uninteresting or do not provide a sufficiently high level of challenge.
- Responses to Parent View indicated that some parents felt the school did not deal well with bullying. Pupils told inspectors that incidents of bullying were rare, that they know about different forms of bullying, and said that when incidents occur they are dealt with quickly. The school council has developed a leaflet for pupils about bullying. However, although the school's records indicate that incidents of bullying are followed up, there is no analysis of the type of bullying or impact of the investigations. Consequently, there is not a clear overview of how often bullying occurs and the effectiveness of the school's response.
- Behaviour around the school is generally good. Older pupils take their roles of being a 'befriender' in the playground seriously.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and parents and carers agree that they are safe. Pupils say that there is always an adult they can turn to if they are worried. The school has an internet code of conduct that is shared with parents and pupils. However, it has not, as yet, developed a policy which details the school's strategy of the teaching of e-safety or of the reporting any incidents of breaches in the code of conduct.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average. Pupils are polite, helpful and respectful to each other and adults, as demonstrated in lessons when they work together in groups or with partners.
- Assemblies, the curriculum and the religious ethos of the school support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils also know the importance of trying to treat everyone as equal, whatever their background or belief.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leaders and managers have not had a good enough impact on pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Staff with responsibility for subjects or sections of the school have not developed their roles sufficiently, either because they are new in post or because they require more training.
- The leadership of the new headteacher is effective and she is very well supported by governors and staff. She has made a rigorous evaluation of the school to provide an accurate picture of its performance and identify the right priorities.
- Checks on teaching are becoming more robust and improvements are already evident, showing that the school is well placed to improve further.
- A formal system for setting targets for teachers has been established and the link between performance and pay progression is robust. Targets are linked directly to pupils' progress.

- The school has made effective use of the support from the local authority, including working with it to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's curriculum meets statutory requirements and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and practise literacy and numeracy skills because additional opportunities have not been identified across a range of subjects. A good range of extra-curricular activities is included.
- The majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire are positive about the school. Increasingly, the school is finding ways to involve parents in their child's learning, for example successful workshops have been held for parents to learn about how subjects are taught.
- Safeguarding arrangements are met and key staff suitably trained. The school effectively ensures that pupils are not discriminated against, and they are given equal opportunity to learn, whatever their needs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have received the necessary training to be able to check that senior leaders are securing rapid improvement and they understand performance data and how the school compares to other schools nationally. They are in school regularly, holding the leadership of the school to account. Minutes of their meetings show they ask relevant questions to challenge the school, for example in relation to staffing changes and pupils' achievement. The governing body ensures that the pupil premium is spent wisely to help overcome barriers to learning. The governors ensure that performance management is carried out appropriately and is linked to pay progression and pupil progress. They also ensure that statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.

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	110416
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	413225

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	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Weaver
Headteacher	Patricia Gurton
Date of previous school inspection	28–29 November 2006
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