

# Frome Valley CofE VA First School

School Drive, Crossways, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8WR

**Inspection dates** 22–23 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' behaviour and relationships are outstanding. All staff consistently provide the highest quality of care and fully safeguard the pupils' welfare.
- Pupils feel very safe and respect the staff, themselves and each other. Pupils say, 'This is a lovely school with very kind children and adults.'
- Teaching is typically good with some that is outstanding. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to think about their work and try to improve it themselves, underpinning their excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' achievement is good and improving. Standards of attainment are above average and progress is quickening across the school. The teaching of reading and mathematics, and pupils' subsequent progress in these aspects, are particular strengths.
- Additional adult guidance is expertly planned to meet the needs of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funds and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Teachers are supported well by committed teaching assistants.
- The headteacher provides the school with strong leadership successfully promoting pupils' learning across a range of stimulating activities, as described in the school's motto, 'Learning as much as we can about all that we can'.
- Governors and senior staff fully share high aspirations and have supported the headteacher effectively to improve the quality of teaching and monitor teachers' performance. This has been successful in managing staff change and is bringing rapid improvement in pupils' achievement.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers spend too much time leading whole-class discussions, which delays some pupils from working independently and impedes the learning of those who need more support.
- Pupils do not always have enough time or opportunity to write by themselves and at length, including recording their ideas in the range of subjects they study.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 12 lessons and was accompanied by the headteacher during several of these observations.
- The inspector observed morning playtime and lunch breaks, and also briefly observed some of the May Day celebrations.
- Meetings were held with members of the school council, and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and breaktimes. The inspector met with members of the governing body and held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector held meetings with school staff, including senior leaders.
- The inspector also took account of 31 parents' and carers' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection, and also received 15 staff questionnaires and three letters from parents. The inspector also spoke informally with a number of parents and carers as they brought their children to school.
- The inspector observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents regarding safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Frome Valley is a below-average-sized school for pupils from Reception to Year 4. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. All other pupils are grouped in separate year group classes.
- Most pupils attending the school are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. These proportions vary from year to year, but overall are broadly similar to those found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- Since the last inspection, there have been staff changes, including a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- A pre-school unit for children aged from two to four years also operates on the school site and is subject to a separate inspection.

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

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching, lifting teaching from good to outstanding overall and accelerating pupils' progress in writing by:
  - reducing the time spent in whole-class discussions so that pupils who are ready can get on with their work independently while those who require it can be given further support
  - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities across the subjects they study to express and record their ideas in writing.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that vary year-on-year, but are typically at the level expected for their age. Early writing skills are often below those expected. The close partnership developing between staff in the on-site pre-school and the Reception class is helping to lift children's skills on entry.
- Strong teaching and learning in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) helps children to build good reading skills and increasingly, their writing skills. Occasionally, opportunities for independent mark-making are missed. They make good progress overall and are well prepared when they transfer to Year 1.
- Pupils of all abilities continue to learn well in response to good teaching in Key Stage 1. They become enthusiastic and confident readers. Attainment in reading dipped in 2012 but is typically above average by the end of Year 2.
- Following a strong whole-school focus on mathematics, pupils make good progress and attain above nationally expected levels. Their learning in mathematics is enriched by a consistent emphasis on practical problem-solving activities. For example, pupils in Year 2 investigate and accurately match visual arrays of dots with appropriate number sentences and pupils in Year 3 explore and successfully order minus degree centigrade temperatures as negative numbers.
- Pupils achieve well in writing by the end of Year 4, but their progress is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics in all years. This is due to variations in the quality of teaching in developing pupils' independent writing skills and moving learners on when ready. Sometimes, opportunities are missed to enable pupils to write in sufficient detail about what they have learnt in the different subjects they study.
- Progress accelerates in Years 3 and 4 and is often outstanding due to the exceptionally skilful way teachers build upon the good start made in establishing the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 4 is above the level normally expected for pupils of this age.
- Pupils supported through pupil premium funding make progress at least as good as, and sometimes better than, their peers. Carefully planned and implemented additional adult support ensures that these pupils also exceed expected levels of attainment. For example, this year, all pupils receiving such support in Year 4 have assessed levels of attainment that are about one term ahead of their peers. Their achievement in reading is a particular strength.
- Due to the well-planned programmes of support, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make at least the expected progress. Highly skilled support helps some pupils to overcome emotional and behavioural challenges.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Almost all teaching is at least good, but while there is some outstanding practice, there is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure equally high rates of progress across the school.
- Where teaching is best, for example in Year 2, there is excitement and challenge, with pupils encouraged to work successfully at a fast pace and with a successful balance achieved between working with partners and by themselves.
- Occasionally, in other classes, teacher-led whole-class discussions are over-long and, while pupils with more ability respond well and derive good benefit from answering questions, some other less-able pupils participate less confidently and do not learn as successfully during these sessions. This also means that occasionally, including children in Reception, pupils do not have enough time to work more independently and, in particular, to write by themselves.
- Pupils build good communication skills because of teachers' strong focus on language

development. Group activities are developed very effectively in all classes, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, who are extremely well supported by caring adults, skilled in raising pupils' self-confidence. Teaching assistants also play a strong part in the teaching of phonics and reading, and supporting pupils when using the school's good range of computers.

- Teachers make beneficial use of topics and weekly themes such as science week which link subjects together that interest pupils greatly. Children in Reception also enjoy a breadth of stimulating practical activity, as seen in their very well-presented learning journals which also show their good progress.
- Other typical strengths in teaching include: sensitively managing pupils' behaviour, promoting highly positive attitudes to learning, adults modelling clear speech and using sharp questioning that deepens pupils' thinking skills. Pupils' self-evaluation skills are exceptionally well promoted. For example, most marking of pupils' work is of a high standard, giving them praise, but also clear next steps for improving their work. Pupils are also expected to act upon the guidance given, so that they become skilled at reviewing and improving their own work.
- Many of these qualities are often evident in mathematics lessons, as for example, in Year 4, where pupils quickly grasped what they had to do, and investigated and accurately measured the areas and perimeters of shapes, and in Year 3, when pupils extended their knowledge of negative numbers using computer programs.

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

- Pupils' outstanding behaviour, and very supportive relationships with each other and with very caring staff, typify the exceptionally positive learning atmosphere evident in all parts of the school. One pupil member of the school council's comment reflected the views of most pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors, when saying: 'We are an anti-bullying school where we have lots of friends.'
- Parents' and carers' on-line questionnaire responses and a few written comments raise some concerns about behaviour, but these are not endorsed by inspection findings. For example, discussions with pupils, observations of classroom learning and of break and lunchtime activities, show that pupils care about each other, respond respectfully to adults, and work and play extremely well together. School records of behaviour, which indicate that there have been no exclusions, also show how a few pupils with emotional behavioural needs have been supported in making significant improvement in overcoming personal challenges.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning, readily share ideas and are particularly industrious in assessing for themselves how well they are doing and how to improve. A scrutiny of pupils' work in books also shows that pupils respond diligently to teachers' suggestions and actively seek to improve.
- Pupils know about the different forms that bullying can take, for example cyber-bullying, and know how to keep safe. They confidently say that 'We feel very safe at school.' Discussions with pupils and observations of pupils' responses in lessons show that pupils have a 'voice' and are not afraid of expressing their ideas and concerns.
- Pupils say they enjoy being at school, especially the different activities they experience in and out of lessons, which include topic work and events such as their own 'Tea Party for Frome Valley Helpers'.
- The pupils' love of school is also seen in the much-improved and now above-average attendance. This is an improvement since the last inspection due to the diligence of senior staff who work closely with pupils and parents and carers to encourage good attendance.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher, well supported by governors and staff, has skilfully steered the school through a period of significant staff change, including at a senior level, since the previous inspection. As a team, leaders and managers share a determination to continue the development of the school, including for example, the further strengthening of the links between the pre-school and Reception class to help raise children's skills.
  - The headteacher has established effective ways of checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, and using them to bring improvement. The focus is clearly on raising teaching from good to outstanding through checking on teachers' performance and setting demanding targets. The staff's very positive responses in their questionnaire illustrate their full support of efforts to bring further improvement.
  - The strengthening of teaching in phonics has raised pupils' achievement in reading, and the focus on extending pupils' problem-solving skills has been particularly successful in accelerating progress in mathematics. Steps being taken to enhance pupils' writing skills are also bringing improvement. These examples show the school's secure capacity to build for even greater success.
  - Leaders manage finances well and in recent years have worked hard and successfully to overcome a deficit budget. School leaders are now enriching the good range of quality learning experiences by providing learning activities and resources, for example laptop computers, which enable subjects to be linked together and explored in a way that is relevant to the pupils' interests and needs.
  - Additional funds such as the pupil premium are used very effectively to boost literacy and numeracy skills, enabling the pupils supported to achieve at least as well, and some to do even better, than other pupils. The high quality of care and in treating pupils equally to eliminate discrimination ensure that everyone, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, achieve well.
  - The pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, enjoyment of school and much-improved attendance reflect clearly the positive links that the school has forged with most parents and carers. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted through a wide variety of stimulating visits and events, together with close links with the church and the community, including other schools.
  - The local authority has supported the school well through a period of change and continues to provide 'light-touch' support.
  - Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, and procedures are in place and known by all staff.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Members of the governing body have strengthened the way they check the work of the school, including through their well-organised and regular visits as 'Year Governors', and have a secure knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors support staff well and are effective in holding senior staff to account by raising pertinent questions about pupils' achievement and how it compares with that seen nationally. Governors make good use of training opportunities and use their skills particularly successfully to manage finance and sustain efficient value for money. They keep a close eye on the performance of teachers and reward success within the school's budgetary constraints. The governors also play an effective role in identifying the right priorities for development, and for example, in making sure that additional funds such as the pupil premium are used well to provide the individual adult support needed to bridge any gaps in pupils' achievement.
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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>	113763
<b>Local authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	412507

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	124
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Keith Campbell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Julie Thorp
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01305 852643
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