

St Christopher's CEVCP School

Bellflower Crescent, Red Lodge, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 8XQ

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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

- Standards are broadly average for the current Year 6 but are inconsistent throughout the school. The progress made by pupils is improving but it varies too much from class to class.
- Pupils are not developing their writing skills at a fast enough pace. Many do not have a sufficiently wide vocabulary and teachers do not provide enough opportunities to improve skills by writing in different styles. Basic writing skills are under-developed.
- Although there is some good teaching, and the amount of this is rising, the quality remains inconsistent and this means pupils' learning is too variable.
- Teachers do not always ensure lessons meet the needs of all pupils. For example, those entitled to pupil premium are well supported in reading but less so in writing and mathematics. Marking of pupils' work does not always make clear what they need to do to improve.
- At times, teachers keep pupils sitting listening for too long rather than taking a more active role in the lessons. Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support pupils' learning.
- Leadership of subjects and other provision is not well developed. Staff need to increase their knowledge and understanding of how to use the available data about pupils' progress to improve provision.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good, strong leadership. They have worked extremely hard over the past year to successfully open the new school and deal with a wide range of difficult staffing issues and rapidly rising numbers.
- Pupils are very positive about school and clearly enjoy their lessons. Their behaviour in and around the school is good. They say that
- Better teaching is helping pupils to link sounds and letters (phonics), and has already led to better progress in reading.
- The governing body have developed a good, effective and efficient structure to help them provide the strategic leadership needed.

they feel safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons and parts of lessons. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, governors, a representative of the local authority, pupils and staff.
- Samples of pupils' work were considered. Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils reading.
- The inspectors analysed and took account of the 22 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and of the views of staff expressed in 31 questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at key inspection documents, including performance data on pupils' progress and attainment produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, self-evaluation work, reports to the governing body and the school improvement plan.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mary Summers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Christopher's Primary School is an average-sized primary school. The school opened in a new purpose-built building in September 2012. It took children from a local school that was closing, and from a number of other schools, as part of the local authorities programme for changing from first and middle schools to a two-tier system. Because of this, the proportion of pupils who join the school at times other than normal is very high and numbers have grown rapidly.
- Most pupils are White British and a very small number of pupils are from a minority ethnic background or have English as an additional language. A significant number come from a local United States military base.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below-average overall but high in some year groups.
- An average proportion of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are from service families.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring the activities provided meet the needs of all pupils, including those entitled to the pupil premium
 - ensuring the marking of pupils' work and the feedback provided to them by staff helps pupils understand the next steps in their learning
 - making more effective use of teaching assistants in supporting pupils' learning
 - using time more effectively so that lessons are well-paced and pupils do not sit listening to teachers for too long.
- Raise standards further in writing by:
 - ensuring sufficient time is given to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills to widen and extend their vocabulary
 - providing enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and for different purposes
 - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting skills.
- Improve the leadership structure by:
 - developing the leadership of subjects and other aspects of the school's work
 - providing appropriate training for staff with leadership responsibilities
 - helping all staff make better use of available information about how well pupils are doing to track the progress in their areas

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The current Year 6 are the first of their age group in the school. The assessment of their learning, supported by the work in their books, shows broadly average standards in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing however, are below average.
- The progress for these pupils has been inconsistent due to changes in the provision including the move to a new school. This year, however, due to good teaching, they have made good progress. An above-average proportion is on track to exceed the expected progress over the key stage. However, throughout the school progress is inconsistent. Reading standards are rising rapidly and progress is now better than that expected due to improved teaching methods and resources.
- Standards in writing throughout the school remain below average. Many pupils do not have enough opportunities to developing their vocabulary through a wide enough range of activities that encourage speaking and listening. Basic spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting skills are below those expected. Teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length and in a range of different styles. The staff and governing body are aware of this and plans are in place to increase progress and raise standards.
- Most children in the Reception classes start school with personal and social skills, and skills in language, communication and number that are below those expected for their age. Children make sound progress and quickly become used to school routines and expectations. The school is successful at developing children's physical skills, especially through outdoor activities. The progress in reading and number work is often good, although that in other areas of learning requires improvement.
- Progress is good in reading due to much improved teaching of phonics. The current Year 1 pupils are on track to exceed the levels expected nationally. In Year 2, pupils know strategies for reading unknown words although their ability and confidence to do so varies. Progress in basic calculation skills in mathematics has improved with the development of a new whole-school policy.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their peers although it varies depending on the level of support they receive. Where this is done well the support helps pupils with significant specific disabilities or special educational needs take a full part in lessons.
- The school's data show pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, or who are from service families, have made very good progress in reading throughout the school and often attain standards that are better than the other pupils. In Year 6, for example, those entitled to pupil premium are now up to a year ahead of their peers in reading and in writing but remain about a term behind in mathematics. This picture is inconsistent across the school as teachers do not plan in sufficient detail to address the needs of these pupils. Generally these pupils are better supported in reading than in writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The teaching team is at an early stage of development as the school has rapidly expanded and new teachers have had to be appointed or redeployed from closing schools. This has made raising standards difficult. Staff have had to focus on moving to and making effective use of the

new building and developing their skills for a new and ever expanding range of age groups.

- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not always explain to them what they have done well or what they need to do to improve. Where the practice is more effective teachers make clear to pupils what they need to do to reach the next level with detailed individual targets.
- Too often teachers' planning does not provide sufficient detail to address the needs of all groups, especially for those entitled to pupil premium. Sometimes the work provided is too easy and some pupils themselves said they found some activities not challenging enough. Insufficient opportunities are provided to improve pupils' vocabulary and their speaking and listening skills.
- Teaching assistants often provide effective support for pupils especially when working with individuals or small groups. However, teachers do not always deploy their staff as effectively as they could so that they have a more positive impact on learning, especially in whole class situations. This is the case when teachers keep their pupils sitting listening for too long and lessons are not sufficiently active to keep all pupils attentive and interested.
- The best teaching is well-planned, imaginative and supported by good resources. Lessons are lively and interactive and the pupils are fully involved in their learning. In Year 1, for example, letter writing skills were very effectively encouraged as pupils wrote to the wolf from their story. In Year 4, an interesting and challenging mathematics activity encouraged some outstanding thinking skills which prompted pupils to set their own problems.
- The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good when pupils are actively engaged in a range of well-organised activities. However, this is not consistent and at times the teaching has similar faults to that found elsewhere as children are talked to for too long and activities are not well matched to their needs.
- The teaching of reading is often good. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and resources have been updated. The teaching provides pupils with more effective activities to help improve their skills.
- There is clearly a very positive ethos throughout the school and staff are committed to making the school highly successful and to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. A major strength is the way teachers have worked together through a difficult period when funding and resources were inadequate. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and thus the improving progress pupils are making.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Most teachers manage pupils well, and establish strong and positive relationships throughout the school. This supports pupils' attitudes to school and learning. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons and often talk enthusiastically about what they are doing.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good. This was observed in assemblies, at lunchtime and when outside at play. When issues arise they are appropriately dealt with and most parents and carers say the school manages behaviour well. Staff say this is not yet always consistent probably because routines are being newly developed in the school and are yet to be fully embedded. Pupils are polite and considerate to others, including visitors.
- Attendance is in line with similar schools nationally. The school works effectively to promote the

importance of good attendance. Few cases of persistent absence remain and the school has examples of excellent improvements in attendance for some past persistent absentees. Pupils clearly enjoy being at school and are punctual.

- Pupils say they feel safe at school, and this is supported by the views of almost all parents and carers. Pupils say that there is little significant bullying, but most are confident that if any did occur it would be dealt with well by the staff. They can talk knowledgeably about different types of bullying including through the use of technology. Pupils say they trust the adults in the school and would share any concerns or worries with them. Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities when any are given to them. This is an area the school has yet to fully develop.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because standards remain too low and the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good. The leadership structure is at an early stage of development and the leadership of a number of subjects and other aspects of the school's work is not yet fully in place. This applies to all areas of the school including the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors, have worked extremely hard over the past year to make the creation of a new school in its new building as successful as it has been. This has been in the face of very significant building issues and particularly a lack of sufficient funding. However, the headteacher is addressing weaknesses and this is leading to better provision. Because of this, there have been recent improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement, especially in reading. These improvements, backed by her leadership, and the positive attitudes of the staff, demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- The headteacher has made appropriate use of a range of training to add to teachers' existing skills although this has been limited by funding and changes to staff. The training and support provided for newly qualified teachers has had a very positive impact on their good teaching skills. More remains to be done to help all staff understand and use the available assessment information more effectively when planning lessons or monitoring the progress of their pupils.
- The money available through the pupil premium is used effectively to help pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or those from service families to take a full part in school life, and receive, where appropriate, specific resources and adult time. This has been particularly successful in reading but is inconsistent throughout the school and more remains to be done to narrow the gaps in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination within the school. There is more to be done to ensure equal opportunities by eliminating the variations in the quality of teaching.
- The school has developed an appropriate curriculum which supports pupils' learning in different subjects. A good range of enrichment activities support pupils' academic and personal development as well as supporting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority has supported the school through the building process in a number of ways and by a variety of training events and advice, for example, sharing examples of good practice in other schools or carrying out joint observations with senior leaders. However, a lack of sufficient funding has been a significant barrier for the school. The provision of new resources and staff has been difficult and has slowed the school's ability to make more rapid progress.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has worked hard over the past year to support the opening of the new school and create an effective and efficient structure to provide strategic leadership and for holding the school to account. The work of the governing body is divided between appropriate groups who meet regularly and this also makes effective use of individual governors' expertise. Governors regularly visit the school, observing activities and watching children at work. They report back to the full governing body and this helps governors to see the impact of their decisions. They have an appropriate understanding of the school's performance management and appraisal systems, and how this has been used. The school is too new for any recent decisions about teachers' pay to have been made but the system is clearly closely linked to performance and responsibilities, and so meets requirements. Governors track finances well and support the school in deciding how to spend the pupil premium funding.

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	124716
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	412898

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Bowman
Headteacher	Kathryn McMurtary
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01638 750342
Email address	office@stcprimary.suffolk.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

