

# Laddingford St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Darman Lane, Maidstone, ME18 6BL

**Inspection dates** 20–21 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school is extremely well led by the headteacher, who has secured substantial improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and behaviour since the last inspection.
- An unwavering focus on improving the quality of teaching, combined with increased expectations of pupils and staff, has been central to the school's success in enabling pupils to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Good quality teaching, with some outstanding teaching, means that pupils' progress is accelerating in all year groups and standards are rising.
- Excellent provision in the Reception class, including high-quality teaching, results in children making rapid gains during their first year in school.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy school and attendance has improved. They feel safe and valued and get on very well with each other.
- The role of the governing body has improved and governors play a positive role in the school's development.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to secure the highest levels of achievement.
- Pupils are not always given sufficient time to respond to the guidance given in teachers' marking.
- Sometimes lesson activities do not stimulate all pupils' interest, and opportunities are missed to extend learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons and part-lessons, including four lesson observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, a group of governors, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders, staff, parents, carers and pupils.
- The inspector took account of 20 responses to the online Parent View survey and eight staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work and analysed a range of documents and policies, including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records, safeguarding documents and a sample of pupils' work.

## Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families. The school currently has no pupils in the latter two groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There is a mixed-age class of Years 1 and 2 pupils, another of Years 3 and 4 pupils and a further class comprising pupils from Year 5 and 6. Children in Reception Year are currently taught with Year 1 and 2 pupils in the afternoons as a temporary measure. Children in Reception Year will be taught in a single-age class from September 2013.
- The proportion of pupils moving into and out of school, other than at expected times, is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has been working in collaboration with three other local schools since September 2012.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise pupils' achievement to the highest levels by ensuring that:
  - questioning is consistently used by teachers to check the understanding of a wide range of pupils and extend learning
  - pupils are given regular opportunities to respond to teachers' written comments in marked work
  - activities are sufficiently stimulating to maintain pupils' interest and concentration in all lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- School information about pupils' progress, observations of pupils' learning during lessons and the quality of work in their books show that pupils make good and often very rapid progress in English.
- The school promotes equal opportunities positively for all pupils. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are helped to aim high following a concerted drive by the headteacher and other senior leaders to raise expectations. As a result, groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress because work is matched accurately to their needs and is sufficiently challenging.
- Children join Reception with a wide range of knowledge, experiences and skills. In 2012 children started in Reception with skills which were at the level expected for their age but this has not always been the case in previous years. There have been significant improvements in the quality and use of the classroom and outdoor area to support learning and the development of children's independence since the last inspection. This factor, combined with outstanding teaching, means that children now make rapid progress during their first year in school, particularly in the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Small numbers of pupils in each year group mean that there are variations in attainment from year to year. In 2012, attainment was broadly average in English and above in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards improved significantly on those seen in 2011 at Key Stages 1 and 2. School information and the work in pupils' books demonstrate clearly that current standards will be higher than in 2012.
- The very few pupils who were eligible to receive support from the pupil premium make good progress. In 2012, the attainment of this group was below that of their classmates and other pupils nationally in English, but ahead of their classmates and other pupils nationally in mathematics. There were no eligible pupils in the preceding two years.
- A robust system to track the progress made by individual pupils and groups is well established. This means that any pupils who are falling behind are promptly identified and extra help is provided. The school quickly assesses the needs of those pupils who join part-way through the school. As a result, these pupils settle quickly and no time is lost in moving their learning forward.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because, while all groups make good progress overall from their starting points, some pupils make slower progress when activities do not capture their full interest and sustained concentration.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers' high expectations and confident subject knowledge mean that pupils of different abilities and backgrounds are consistently challenged to do their best in all the subjects they study, including English and mathematics. For example, in Reception Year, high-quality teaching and the brisk pace maintained during lessons about the link between letters and sounds (phonics) ensures that children make rapid progress in building good reading and writing skills.
- Teachers regularly use information about progress to plan work that meets pupils' needs. Teachers clarify what is expected of pupils before they start work so that pupils understand what they need to do to be successful.
- Raised expectations are reflected in the way that pupils complete and present their work. Pupils take pride in their work because they know that their efforts will be recognised and valued by their teachers.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed so that the vulnerable pupils working with them make similar progress to their classmates, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. For example, effective support for pupils in Years 1 and 2 meant they were able to

choose from a range of strategies and use these successfully while solving money problems.

- Teachers' questioning is usually used well to probe pupils' understanding and to ensure that the lesson meets everyone's needs. For example, skilful questioning in a lesson in Year 3/4 meant that pupils were able to use their knowledge of perimeter and number to explain how they would tackle mathematical problems about shapes. However, sometimes teachers restrict their questions to pupils who have their hands up during lessons. As a result, opportunities are missed to check how well other pupils in the class are doing and a few of these pupils lose concentration and their learning slows.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and includes teachers' comments about what they have done well and how to improve further. However, pupils are not always given the time to respond to guidance, for example, by completing additional tasks to extend their learning.

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

- Behaviour is typically good and much improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are polite and welcoming and they are keen to learn during lessons. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that most pupils are well behaved and all those parents and carers who completed the Parent View questionnaire agree.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved during playtimes and when moving around the school. Games equipment provides pupils with plenty to do during lunchtime and helps to make the lunchtime break an enjoyable time. Lunchtime supervisors chat companionably with pupils and help them to play games and pupils treat adults, and each other, with respect.
- Pupils feel their contributions to the school, such as serving on the school council or as head boy or head girl, are useful and valued.
- There has been a successful focus on attendance, a key issue from the last inspection. Effective procedures are in place to follow up unexplained absenteeism and the school works positively with families and agencies. As a result, attendance rates have improved and are in line with the national average.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel very safe in school and that they can rely on adults to help them if they have any concerns. One pupil said, 'There's always someone to talk to.'
- Pupils know what bullying is and some of the forms it can take and say it is uncommon. This view is supported by school records. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Parents and carers strongly agree that their children are safe and happy at school.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because occasionally activities in lessons are not sufficiently interesting to capture all pupils' interest. When this is the case their positive attitudes to learning dip.

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

- Following her appointment, the headteacher quickly identified groups of pupils who were falling behind due to variations in the quality of teaching and a culture of low expectations. Elements of weak teaching have been successfully challenged and eradicated and support put in place to address gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved substantially since the last inspection and pupils' progress has accelerated in all year groups.
- Teachers, senior leaders, governors and other members of staff share the headteacher's high aspirations and staff morale is very positive. Teachers are reflective about their own practice and committed to improving the quality of teaching even further.
- The headteacher makes astute and accurate evaluations of what is working well in lessons and of what teachers can do to make them even better. As a result, teachers receive clear and consistent messages about what they need to do to improve their practice and are supported by well-focused training.

- The introduction of a robust and reliable system for tracking and checking pupils' progress has been a key element in increasing teachers' accountability, raising expectations and making sure that the correct level of work is set to maximise pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum provides a broad and balanced foundation for learning and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are interested in learning about people from a wide range of cultures and are respectful of others when discussing their beliefs. For example, pupils in Year 5/6 made mature and perceptive comments about Sikhism after seeing a film clip about a service in a Gurdwara.
- The school's collaboration with three other schools in the locality has enabled the sharing of good practice and resources and has made a positive contribution to improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The local authority has provided positive and successful support for the school's development, including training to help teachers to improve their practice and specialist support for the development of provision in the Reception Year.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body's enthusiastic and committed support for the school is combined with good levels of challenge for school leaders. Governors know about the quality of teaching and how pay increases are awarded. They are well informed by the headteacher about the school's performance and are regularly involved in activities, such as visits to classrooms, with a clear focus on how well pupils are learning. They know how well pupils are doing in relation to other schools nationally. Governors have a firm grasp on how the pupil premium funding is being spent and the impact on the achievement of those pupils eligible. Safeguarding arrangements are up to date and meet statutory requirements.

## 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>	118637
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	405798

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

<b>Type of school</b>	All-through
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	67
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Murdoch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Oliver
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 871270
<b>Fax number</b>	01622 871270
<b>Email address</b>	office@laddingford.kent.sch.uk



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