

# Blandford St Mary Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Birch Avenue, Blandford St Mary, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 9QD

**Inspection dates** 25–26 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The school benefits considerably from the exceptionally strong leadership of the headteacher and his continuous and relentless drive for improvement. He is well supported by staff and governors.
- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching, and checking that ensures swift intervention when any pupil's progress slows. Attainment is above average by the time pupils leave.
- Reception children get off to an exceptionally good start and most reach average attainment by the end of the year.
- In the past few years, progress in reading and writing has been rapid. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected levels in the national tests for English is improving well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong, resulting in their excellent behaviour and safety awareness.
- The highly innovative and motivating curriculum, that makes learning very relevant for pupils, ensures that they develop excellent attitudes to learning and work hard.
- Very rigorous and comprehensive systems for monitoring the school's work help ensure that development strategies are constantly adjusted to promote pupils' progress well.
- The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well. Governors are effectively involved in all aspects of the school's work and hold staff to account well with regard to promoting pupils' progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is consistently good only a minority is outstanding and the use of pupils' targets to help pupils improve is too variable.
- Progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in English and the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is slower than other groups.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to lessons, heard a sample of pupils read and scrutinised a sample of pupils' written work.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff including senior and middle managers. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 24 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also staff and pupil views.
- They observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents including the school's records on current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to planning and monitoring and safeguarding were also looked at.

## Inspection team

Diane Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Robert Arnold

Additional Inspector



## Full report

### Information about this school

- Blandford St Mary is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported by school action is below the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- Few pupils come from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language.
- A higher proportion of pupils than is seen nationally joins the school after the Reception year or leaves before Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has risen considerably over the past few years and is broadly average.
- The governing body provides a breakfast club for pupils.
- The Little Birch Pre-School shares the site. This is run by a private provider and was not part of this inspection.
- There has been a considerable number of staff changes over the past few years and a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the school's previous inspection. The current headteacher acts as a self-evaluation partner for local authority schools.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Build on, and extend, the procedures in place to ensure that the large majority of teaching is outstanding, and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics so that it is as rapid as in reading and writing by:
  - ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the use of pupils' individual improvement targets and helping pupils recognise that there are steps, beyond their current target, they can take to progress even further, especially in mathematics
  - assessing how well pupils are doing in lessons by making sure that more opportunities are taken to raise the level of challenge for pupils who are learning quickly
  - enhancing the strategies still further to help disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, especially for pupils supported by school action
  - providing more challenging mathematical problem solving activities and placing a greater emphasis on data handling in the older year groups.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry to Reception has declined since the previous inspection. Children start school with skills that are below those normally seen at this age, but lower for a significant minority in early literacy and social skills. Children make rapid progress, so that most reach average levels by the time they enter Year 1.
- Below average results in the 2012 Year 1 phonics screening test have been addressed exceptionally well. Most pupils in Years 1 and 2 read new words confidently using phonics (the sounds letters make in words) well. They enjoy books and talk enthusiastically about the stories and characters. Attainment in reading is above average by Year 2.
- These skills are built on especially well in the older year groups, with the majority of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in national reading tests and using their well developed reading skills to support learning in a wide range of subjects. Their attainment is above average.
- Above average attainment in writing is the result of rapid progress made in this subject over a number of years and the exceptionally good start Reception children make in acquiring the basic skills of handwriting, spelling, sentence construction and punctuation.
- Year 2 pupils write interesting and vivid stories because they are very secure about using the language needed to make these effective. By Year 6, pupils write confidently in a wide range of styles, for example in presenting an argument or writing instructions. The proportion reaching Level 5 in national assessments is consistently better than that seen nationally.
- The school is working hard to raise mathematics progress to the same accelerated levels as in reading and writing. Progress is good and the proportion of pupils making steady progress between Years 3 and 6 is much higher this year. However, progress is not yet as rapid in mathematics as it is in English.
- Very effective promotion of calculation skills and place value ensures most Year 2 pupils work confidently with data and measures. Year 6 pupils work very confidently with a wide range of measures, fractions, decimals and percentages, although their work books show limited use of data.
- In all year groups pupils solve mathematical problems set by their teachers well, but have few opportunities for planning and carrying out these on their own, including in a range of other subjects such as science, which limits progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special education needs achieve well, with virtually all reaching the levels expected for their age in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. This is a testament to the very effective provision for pupils with significant needs whose progress is rapid. Pupils supported by school action achieve well, but their progress is not as swift as this.
- Very effective support for pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding means they rapidly close the gap on their peers. All groups of eligible pupils make at least good progress by Year 6, so that they are roughly a term behind their peers in English and mathematics. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also achieve well.
- Parents are very pleased with the progress their children make.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Very strong systems to support and improve teaching have helped to ensure that it is of good quality despite the many changes in staffing. Pupils and their parents rightly agree that the teaching encourages good progress.
- Teaching in Reception is exceptionally strong and the accommodation is very well organised to encourage learning, especially for the key skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers' and classroom assistants' subject knowledge is good and the staff explain new

learning effectively. In most lessons, well planned activities encourage pupils of different ability levels to do well; although, on a few occasions, the needs of pupils on the cusp of moving on to a higher level are not specifically targeted which impedes their progress.

- Highly challenging activities for reading and writing help pupils to make rapid progress in these subjects and a strong focus on basic skills such as calculation helps pupils to achieve well in mathematics. However, too often mathematical investigations or problem-solving activities are over planned by the teachers which restricts pupils' ability to plan and carry them out for themselves.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is of consistently high quality so that pupils are always attentive, even if the pace of learning slows, and those pupils who find good behaviour difficult are always managed well.
- In outstanding lessons an excellent pace helps move learning forward very quickly. However, not all staff capitalise on pupils' excellent attitudes to learning by accelerating the pace and encouraging pupils to do their very best.
- Staff consistently monitor how well pupils are learning throughout lessons, swiftly correcting errors or providing extra support for those pupils who find the task difficult. However, they rarely adjust activities for pupils who are learning quickly, which limits their progress.
- Discussions, including through using pupils' talk partners, are used well to help pupils understand, but not all staff direct their questioning to the full range of ability groups.
- Marking is uniformly good. It clearly indicates what pupils have achieved and how they could do better; although, in writing, partly because it is a development priority, there is an over emphasis on correcting spelling.
- Pupils are set challenging individual improvement targets which encourage them to do well. However, pupils report that their teachers are inconsistent in the way they use and set out targets, which makes it confusing for them. Little information is provided as to how skills could be developed further beyond the levels identified in the target set, which limits pupils' aspirations and achievement.
- Special activities to support pupils who might be at risk of underachieving ensure that they achieve at least well. Strategies in place to promote the learning of pupils working at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs and those in receipt of pupil premium funding support their progress exceptionally well. This clearly demonstrates the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity.

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

- Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning are a key reason why the pupils achieve well and why attendance levels are rising and are above average. Parents fully acknowledge that this area is a significant strength of the school.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school, valuing their time there and feeling very well prepared for their future education.
- From the time they enter Reception, pupils benefit from exceptionally strong promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils' relationships with adults and each other are exemplary.
- Pupils are uniformly polite and helpful and take great pride in their learning, being very keen to show visitors how well they are doing.
- Pupils report that bullying in any form is rare as the school takes this very seriously. Any incident of unkind behaviour is fully logged and rigorously addressed. This helps ensure that no pupil is discriminated against and makes the school a very happy and safe place to be, including in the well-run breakfast club.
- Outstanding procedures in place to support those pupils who find good behaviour difficult and excellent classroom management mean that these pupils' behaviour improves very well over time and that lesson activities are rarely interrupted.
- Pupils themselves demonstrate a real understanding for, and support of, pupils who find some

aspects of school life difficult and show a sensitive awareness of cultural or religious differences. This prepares them well for life in Britain's diverse society.

- Pupils are strongly aware of how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

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

- Underpinning the school's success are the exceptional skills of the headteacher and his relentless drive in seeking ways to improve the school still further. This has led to a comprehensive range of highly innovative systems being put in place to evaluate the school's work and regularly monitor improvement strategies. It is a key reason for the rapid progress now being made in reading and writing and the eradication of weaknesses seen in mathematics at the previous inspection. Pupils, staff and parents uniformly praise the headteacher's work.
- Very supportive and challenging systems in place to performance manage teaching and provide well-considered training have helped ensure that, despite the many staff changes, teaching is good and continues to improve. Areas identified as requiring improvement at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. These strengths give the school confidence and capacity to make further improvements.
- Subject leaders' roles have been enhanced by the widening of their monitoring and areas of responsibility and both their work and class teachers' work benefit from the highly effective and very regular checking of pupils' progress. This helps ensure that staff and governors support the headteacher in his drive for improvement well.
- Pupils benefit from a curriculum that supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development especially well. Activities make learning highly relevant and very interesting, but there are few opportunities to consolidate mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Rigorous attention is paid to safeguarding arrangements which fully meet government requirements, including in the vetting of staff and child protection procedures. Governors' commitment to this aspect is also very strong.
- Despite being a light touch school for the local authority, school leaders actively seek regular reviews of their work from the authority, benefiting from the rigorous challenge and effective support provided.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors support and challenge the school effectively, being very well informed from regular reviews of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Governors are very committed to training in a range of areas; consequently, their good understanding of data ensures they accurately compare Blandford St Mary's performance with that of other schools. Very good performance management procedures help governors to gain a clear understanding of the impact staff are having on pupils' progress. This allows them to make very good decisions regarding salary increases, including for the headteacher, which are always based on improving pupils' performance. Governors are very committed to first hand monitoring which supports staff well, most notably in rapidly improving phonics this year. However, not all their monitoring is as well targeted at other development priorities such as mathematics. Governors' full involvement in allocating pupil premium funding, largely to provide extra staff to support the learning and behavioural needs of pupils who receive it, and very regular monitoring of its effectiveness, helps ensure this is used to very good effect. This is an example of governors' very strong promotion of value for money in the school's work.

## 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>	113795
<b>Local authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	403213

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Phipps
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Lavis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30–31 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01258 453331
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