

Bridport, St Mary's C of E VC Primary School

Skilling Hill Road, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 5LA

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Teachers know the pupils very well, and use this, together with their excellent knowledge of the subjects they teach, to plan lessons which challenge pupils. Teaching is consistently good and occasionally outstanding.
- Attainment is slightly above average. From their starting points, all groups of pupils make good progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Many of the disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make even better progress, because they are very well supported.
- The strong emphasis on the school's values and plenty of opportunities to sort out any worries mean pupils feel valued and very safe.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. A very few pupils face very challenging circumstances in their lives, and are well supported so that they can cope with this, and be ready for learning.
- Since taking up her post in January 2012, the headteacher has tackled all the key issues facing the school and developed a strong leadership team. Together they have developed a strong vision for improving teaching and learning.
- Governors provide good levels of challenge to the school and check the school's views about performance when they visit the school. They make sure that all requirements for keeping pupils safe are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While it is improving, progress in writing is not as consistent as it is in reading and mathematics, and consequently pupils do not always reach standards which are quite as high.
- Occasionally, the most able pupils are given work which is not hard enough for them, or do not have enough chances to decide for themselves what they should do next.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection the inspectors observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons, taught by seven teachers. Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing, as well as some of the work they have done in the past. About a third of the observations were carried out together with senior leaders.
- The inspectors met with leaders across the school to discuss the school's evaluation of pupils' learning and the progress they make. The inspectors also met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils in their lessons and during their free time.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documents provided by the school and by governors, detailing teachers' checks about pupils' progress, the ways the school helps keep pupils safe, and the plans for on-going improvements. Minutes recording the discussions and developments within the school, including the meetings of the governing body, were also reviewed.
- The inspectors considered the 17 responses to Parent View, the online survey for Ofsted. Further views were gathered through informal discussions with parents at the start and end of the school day, and through a number of letters received by the inspection team during the inspection.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqui Good

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average school, with one class in each year group. The headteacher took up her post in January 2012. There have been several changes of staff for this academic year.
- Almost all pupils are White British. A very few other pupils come from a range of different backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This funding is made available by the government to help pupils catch up with other pupils in the school. This includes pupils who are known to have been eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority, and children of parents in the services. Some of the pupils eligible for this support also have other, complex social needs.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school meets the floor standards, the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils in English and mathematics, set by the government.
- There is a children's centre located on the school site, run by the local authority. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements.
- The local authority has reduced the level of support it provides for the school. The headteacher and other senior leaders are used by the local authority to support other school leaders in bringing about improvements, particularly in supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency of pupils' progress in writing, especially at Key Stage 1, and raise attainment to match that in reading and mathematics, by:
 - providing pupils in all year groups with more opportunities to write for realistic purposes across the topics they study
 - developing pupils' confidence and independence by evaluating their progress and setting their own ambitious targets.
- Increase the frequency of outstanding teaching, sharing best practice already in the school, by:
 - providing more-able pupils with work which stretches them fully and develops their independence
 - more rapidly adapting the tasks and teachers' explanations in response to how quickly pupils are learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From their starting points, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 6, pupils have typically reached standards which have been broadly average, and the provisional results for 2013 show that standards have risen over the last few years. A dip in the standards reached at the end of Year 6 in 2012 has been successfully addressed. The unusually low starting points for this group meant that they, too, made good progress.
- During Key Stage 1, standards have been rising because of the increasing progress pupils make. Improvements in writing have not yet had as much impact on the results, and in 2013, this group of pupils reached standards which were below average. However, the starting points of this group were particularly low.
- When they join the school in Reception, many children have skills and knowledge which are well below the levels typical for their age, particularly in speaking and listening. Good teaching and carefully chosen resources mean they quickly settle in, enjoy school, improve their speaking and listening skills, and develop great curiosity. As a result, they acquire good skills as learners.
- Pupils currently in the school are well set to exceed the standards achieved recently, including in writing. Work in their books and teachers' records shows that good progress is typical. Pupils from different backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, make similar good progress.
- Reading is a strength of the school and all groups of pupils are nurtured to appreciate the importance of this skill. Any pupils at risk of falling behind are identified very quickly and highly effective support is put in place to accelerate their reading. Pupils greatly enjoy reading a wide range of texts and are confident in doing so.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress, and some make outstanding progress, because the support they receive is closely tailored to their particular needs. Leaders frequently checked to see that these strategies are making enough difference, and hold the teachers to account for the progress of each pupil.
- The pupil premium funds are used well to provide additional support from adults, particularly to help eligible pupils. The Den, a space where pupils can be calm and focus on their learning, plays a vital role in this, and ensures pupils feel safe and are able to continue learning. As a result, these groups of pupils reach the same levels in English and mathematics as other pupils in the school. Information and communication technology is used well to develop research and other communication skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is almost always good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers' good relationships with pupils and strong knowledge about what they are teaching mean that learning is well planned to meet the needs of most pupils. Teachers make sure that they use a range of different teaching strategies to maintain pupils' focus on learning and instil a sense of urgency.
- Lessons typically begin with a clear statement about what pupils will be learning, as well as a few indications about how pupils will know if they have achieved this. However, this is not yet consistent and, occasionally, there are missed opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress and set their own targets for the standard, quality and quantity of work they can do, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Teachers are developing their confidence to change their explanations or the tasks they have set for pupils, depending on how quickly pupils are learning. However, this does not always happen quickly enough and, occasionally, this slows the pace of learning.
- Strategies to teach phonics (the linking of letters and the sounds they make) are well established and effective. Mathematics has been another area in which the school's focus on improving teaching has improved standards. There has been an increasing emphasis on strategies to teach

writing, and evidence in the school shows that standards of writing are beginning to catch up with those in reading and mathematics.

- Teachers give pupils good opportunities to write longer pieces of work, and pupils enjoy these more reflective occasions. However, a few of the tasks pupils are given when they are learning more about writing are not related to realistic reasons for writing about events in the world around them and so their motivation wanes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. They frequently check how well these pupils are doing and follow their progress closely. Any sign that a pupil is at risk of falling behind is addressed quickly, and the most appropriate strategies put in place to tackle the issues and to accelerate their learning.
- In most classes, teachers give pupils accurate feedback about the work they have done, making it clear where they have succeeded and what they need to do next. In the best examples, pupils are routinely expected to respond to these comments in their books, and this is becoming increasingly common.
- Teachers make sure that pupils and parents know what is expected of the work pupils do at home, and that pupils get additional support at school if they need it, so that all pupils develop positive attitudes to homework.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say that they like being at school and that the teachers make learning fun. Behaviour is almost always good.
- Most parents, and all the pupils spoken to, agree that pupils are usually very well behaved. The school's systems to encourage the best behaviour and to promote the values of the school are well established.
- A very few pupils have behavioural, emotional and social disabilities or face exceptionally challenging circumstances at home. These pupils are extremely well supported by highly dedicated, well-trained adults who make sure they feel safe and well cared for. Their own learning benefits from this and they are not allowed to disrupt the learning of others.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning are given considerable emphasis and pupils respond sensitively. They enjoy the music, art and cookery clubs, and like the opportunities they get to help one another. For example, pupils trained as peer mediators feel they make a difference, helping other pupils to sort things out if they fall out with one another.
- Physical education is of good quality because teachers are well trained and the school make the most of support from specialised instructors. The emphasis on keeping fit is strongly promoted, not least by governors' involvement in a range of sporting clubs. The school were very proud to have won a skipping competition against much larger schools in the area. This demonstrates the highly positive attitudes pupils have towards keeping healthy.
- Pupils receive good training about a wide range of situations in which they can help to keep themselves safe, including road safety, using the internet safely, and safety around the home.
- In the past, attendance has been below average, but the school's strenuous efforts to make clear the importance of being at school has had a considerable impact. As a result, attendance has improved and is broadly average overall, and more recently above average. In the week of the inspection, the Year 5 and 6 classes were delighted to celebrate their 100% attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- Since arriving at the school, the headteacher has established an accurate picture of its performance, developed a strong vision for bringing about improvements and established an effective senior leadership team. Behaviour has improved, markedly so for some pupils, and the frequency of incidents has declined considerably.
- Any teaching which has required improvement has been identified quickly by senior leaders,

training and support provided, and the expectations of the school communicated clearly. Consequently, most teaching is good and weaker teaching is increasingly rare. The headteacher and governors have robust procedures to ensure that they accurately evaluate the quality of teaching and leadership, and use this information when considering any additional pay awards.

- Recent changes in staff have been well managed so that those who provide leadership of different aspects of the school are well trained and equipped to do so. While some of the staff are new to these roles, they are already having considerable impact. Those who are more established as leaders ensure that their colleagues get the support they need to develop their leadership skills.
- Teachers work together to make sure that pupils get a broad and balanced range of topics to study and that this curriculum prepares them well for the next stage of their education, and for life in a democratic United Kingdom.
- The needs of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, as well as those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are closely tracked and matched with exceptionally well-chosen strategies to help them. As a result, they make at least good progress. A few, who face extremely challenging circumstances, are helped to make the most of their time at school and to cope with the difficulties they face outside of school.
- Senior leaders have worked hard to keep attendance targets explicitly in focus and have brought about significant improvements, particularly for a few families. This has greatly improved the progress of the pupils involved.
- As the impact of the headteacher has become increasingly evident, the local authority has reduced the level of support it gives the school. Its leaders now provide considerable support for other schools, both in developing the skills of new headteachers elsewhere, in promoting the very best practice in supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, in developing research about education within schools, and in keeping pupils safe.
- The improvements in behaviour, teaching and in the support provided for vulnerable pupils show that the school has the capacity to keep improving still further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been significant changes to the governing body, whose members are well informed and actively involved in the life of the school. They have helped to develop the strong vision for providing pupils with high quality teaching and learning to maximise their success. Many governors provide practical support alongside the effective challenge they bring to the school. They frequently visit the school and establish their own views to check the self-evaluation of senior leaders, and listen closely to what pupils and parents think about the school. They undertake appropriate training so that they can accurately compare the performance of the school against that of others, nationally and locally. They carefully consider how the pupil premium funding is used, and check that this is effective in closing any gaps with other pupils. Governors keep a close check on how the finances of the school are used, to give pupils the best possible opportunities. This includes checking that any pay increases are linked to teachers' performance.
 - Governors make sure that all the necessary procedures are followed, to check that any adults working with the pupils are appropriate to do so. They put a high priority on health and safety, and ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

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	113757
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	426844

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	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Shelley
Headteacher	Helen Farmer
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 October 2013
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