

St Botolph's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Dover Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 9PL

Inspection dates

8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- School leaders have not acted quickly enough to address all areas identified for improvement at the last inspection, particularly teaching.
- More regular checks are now made to see how well pupils are doing but teachers are not held well enough to account by leaders for pupils' progress.
- The school's development plan is not clear enough about how work to improve the school will be checked, notably by governors.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school, which means pupils' progress is uneven and not as good as it should be.
- Teachers have set targets for pupils but these are not always checked closely enough to make sure they meet pupils' needs. Too many pupils are still unsure of exactly what they need to do to improve and hit their targets.
- Subject leaders are not involved enough in driving improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher recognises the improvements needed and is building a dedicated staff team who are fully committed to improving the school. She is taking effective action to improve important areas such as progress in mathematics, and has used a partnership with another school well to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is now a strength of the school. Children achieve well because teaching is matched carefully to their needs.
- Pupils' attendance is good. They feel safe at school and are safety conscious.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 12 teachers or teaching assistants. Six of the lessons were observed jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils reading and looked at pupils' workbooks.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher; members of the senior leadership team; subject leaders for mathematics and English; the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors; and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with a representative group of pupils from across the school and also pupils on the school council. They attended collective worship and observed pupils in the dining room and playground.
- The inspectors took account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 21 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. A range of documents was scrutinised including those relating to the tracking of pupils' progress, the school's records of checks on the quality of teaching, the school's self-assessment, the governing body minutes, behaviour and bullying logs, pupils' attendance records, staff training records and checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Amanda Gard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Westall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. It is expected to double in size over the next six years with two classes now in Reception and Year 1, and two classes expected in each Reception year from now on.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those supported at school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs, is broadly in line with other schools.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is lower than average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after and pupils with a parent or carer in the armed forces.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- An acting headteacher, who was previously deputy headteacher, is leading the school after the departure of the headteacher at the end of the last academic year.
- At the time of the inspection a building project was underway to provide additional accommodation for the growing number of pupils. Some pupils were being taught in areas of the school converted on a temporary basis into classrooms.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by ensuring teachers always:
 - give sufficiently clear explanations of tasks so pupils know exactly what is expected of them
 - ask questions which probe pupils' understanding and develop their thinking
 - match work well to the needs of all pupils including the most capable and those requiring additional support
 - use target setting effectively so all pupils fully understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by ensuring that:
 - the school development plan is sharpened to include a clearer focus on the school's priorities and measurable outcomes so that progress can be better checked
 - subject leaders take greater responsibility for checking on the progress and standards of all learners in their subjects, and improving them
 - teachers are set clearer targets linked to pupils' progress so they are more accountable
 - governors hold leaders more closely to account for making sure that all pupils make good progress
 - more partnerships with other schools are used to develop good practice in teaching in the way that has been seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress is inconsistent in Key Stage 1. It slows down in Year 1 and pupils do not do as well as they should. But in Year 2, better progress means they catch up and attainment is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The progress of more able pupils in Key Stage 1 requires improvement because it is too variable. The proportion attaining higher levels in reading and writing is in line with the national average, but below in mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check is in line with the national average. Pupils in Key Stage 1 enjoy reading and by the end of Year 2 the majority of pupils who did not meet the expected level in Year 1 have caught up well.
- In Key Stage 2 progress remains patchy. Pupils do not all do as well as they could each year, especially in writing and mathematics, and attainment is not as high as it should be by the time they enter Year 6. More able pupils do not all achieve as much as they could.
- Once in Year 6, pupils make better progress because teaching is better, although there is still inconsistency in the rates of progress of pupils across years. By the end of Year 6 pupils attain broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics but they could do better if they made consistently good progress when younger.
- The school's programme of guided reading supports pupils to continue to develop their skills across Key Stage 2 so they efficiently work out words within texts. This helps them to reach expected standards in reading by the time they leave the school. Attitudes to reading are generally positive although pupils are not always motivated by the range of books on offer so they do not all choose to develop their skills independently through reading for pleasure.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as the small proportion eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress to others. In common with other pupils, they accelerate progress in Year 6 but make inconsistent progress in Years 1 to 5. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium benefit from small group teaching in mathematics and literacy. Attainment of these pupils is similar to other pupils by the time they leave.
- Children enter the Reception Year at a level of development typical for their age in all areas including language and communication, mathematics and personal development. Teaching is closely matched to their needs so that they achieve well. By the end of Reception most reach a good level of development and they are well prepared for Year 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There are pockets of good teaching across the school but too much teaching requires improvement. Consequently, not all pupils make good enough progress.
- Children in the Reception classes make a positive start. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last inspection. A rich range of learning opportunities is provided which support good development of pupils' basic skills and personal development. Adults judge well whether to intervene when children engage in self-chosen tasks, or whether to stand back and let them work things out for themselves. This helps them make good progress.
- In Years 1 to 6 teaching is more variable. Where teaching is good, pupils know exactly what they are learning and are shown how to achieve well. In these lessons pupils make good progress. Too often, however, teachers do not explain clearly enough what they are looking for. Pupils do not enjoy these lessons as much because they are unsure of what is expected of them so they cannot do their best.
- In lessons where teaching is not as good, tasks are not well enough matched to what learners can do. Work set is too often 'more of the same' rather than a new challenge. More able pupils spend too much time completing tasks they can already do and so they do not make enough progress. Pupils who require additional support are not always provided with resources such as

cubes in mathematics or practical work to help them to learn better.

- In the most effective lessons there is a good level of challenge for pupils. This is particularly the case in mathematics in Key Stage 2 where pupils are taught in smaller groups according to ability. In many of these sessions pupils show high levels of concentration because they are engaged in relevant tasks which are at the right level of difficulty.
- On occasion teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding. They listen carefully to pupils' responses and alter their teaching accordingly to boost progress. However, in some lessons teachers too readily accept simple responses, do not make pupils think hard enough or check if pupils understand what they are learning.
- Teachers are using the system of setting targets for pupils introduced this term to help focus pupils on their next steps. Where the system is used well pupils know exactly what to work on and proudly show examples where they have achieved their target. However, there is a lack of consistency and some pupils are unsure about what their target means because it is not written in simple enough language. For others, including more able pupils, targets are not always demanding enough to help them reach the higher levels in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour and safety require improvement because positive attitudes to learning are not consistently developed across the school. Pupils are usually compliant in lessons, and do as they are asked. Most pupils want to please staff but when teaching is not good they lose concentration and a few misbehave, which slows the pace of learning.
- Adults develop good relationships with children in the Reception classes. Smiles and laughter are everywhere, children feel confident and secure and this helps them to make good progress.
- Across the rest of the school relationships are also good between pupils and with staff. Teachers provide positive role models and there is an expectation that pupils are well mannered.
- The daily act of collective worship provides well-planned opportunities for spiritual development and reflection. The Christian ethos of the school provides a strong sense of a positive and caring community. Equal opportunities are strongly promoted.
- Pupils usually play happily together in the playground. A recent focus on behaviour has been effective in reinforcing pupils' understanding of school rules. They have a good understanding about the rewards and sanctions in place and this is helping most of them to behave well.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. The school effectively encourages good levels of attendance through awards such as 'Attendance Ted' and 'Punctuality Pig'. The school has successfully increased attendance levels of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, some of whom had too much time off school.
- Pupils are taught well about safety issues including e-safety, road safety and the dangers of drugs. They have a good understanding of the dangers of bullying and say it is rare. Although there is some name-calling adults act quickly to stop this happening. No homophobic or racist bullying has been reported. Pupils feel safe at school and are confident adults look after them well.
- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted well. Additional funding for physical education has been well targeted to provide coaching for pupils and training for teachers as well as new equipment for lessons. Pupils were inspired by a recent talk from an Olympic swimmer. Through such events, as well as through encouraging competitive sport, the school is raising pupils' aspirations to be fit and healthy.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership of the school requires improvement because it has made too little impact on teaching and the school development plan has not been effective enough in driving improvements in

areas identified at the last inspection.

- The acting headteacher has worked hard to develop a positive and cohesive staff team. There is unity of purpose among the staff, reflected in the overwhelmingly positive responses to the staff questionnaire.
 - The acting headteacher has reviewed the school development plan to focus on a few key areas, but it lacks detail about some aspects of what needs to be done and clear enough measures of success to check the impact of actions. Nevertheless, leaders have sustained areas of strength, such as pupils' attendance, improved areas such as the Early Years Foundation Stage, and are showing the capacity to make further improvements.
 - The special educational needs co-ordinator has sensibly been allocated additional hours and has set up good systems to ensure the progress of pupils with additional needs is tracked effectively. These are not yet fully in place.
 - Subject leaders take the initiative in leading some improvements, for example sharpening marking to make it clearer to pupils what they have done well and how to improve. They use monitoring to identify the need, for example, to provide more practical resources in mathematics. However, they are not involved enough in checking pupils' progress over time so as to identify where teaching needs to improve, or leading the action to bring this about.
 - Parents are positive about the school and the vast majority would recommend the school to others. Some respondents to Parent View indicated their child does not make good progress and inspection findings support this. Although parents said they find the staff 'very approachable', communication with parents is an area the acting headteacher is rightly working to improve.
 - The school is keen to benefit from good practice elsewhere. It uses partnerships well in the Reception classes where teachers used support from a local outstanding provider to improve teaching. The acting headteacher is benefiting from collaboration with the experienced headteacher of another local school. However, using such partnerships to develop the school's work more widely is underdeveloped.
 - Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and meet requirements.
 - The local authority has provided limited support until this term when it set up the link to the neighbouring headteacher. Education officers recognise the need to monitor the school more closely in future, and that the school has moved forward too slowly.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors visit the school often and are very supportive of the school's leaders, offering constructive and helpful advice on day-to-day matters. They have a good grasp of the school's financial affairs. There is a useful programme of monitoring in place to check many aspects of the school's work and governors ask pertinent questions so they understand what is working well. Governors lack confidence in using data to hold the school to account and the school development plan does not set clear enough benchmarks to help them check progress. As a result they sometimes too readily accept reports from the school's leaders, for example about the impact of the pupil premium grant on eligible pupils, without checking fully enough for themselves. Governors understand how systems to manage the performance of teachers link to salary progression. Teachers are set targets for improving their work but these are sometimes too general and do not always link closely enough to pupils' progress, making it difficult to hold teachers accountable for how well pupils do.
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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

Unique reference number	118856
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426487

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	4 – 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fr. Lawrence Smith
Headteacher	Amy Chitty
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 September 2011
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