

Fordcombe Church of England Primary School

Fordcombe Green, Fordcombe, Kent, TN3 0RY

Inspection dates 23–24 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		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:

- Achievement is not good enough over time, particularly in mathematics in Key Stage 2. This is despite some very recent improvements to rates of progress, because targets until recently were not ambitious enough.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good in all year groups because the pace of lessons and the work given to the more able pupils is not consistently strong in all classes.
- Teachers do not always use opportunities in different subjects, including science, for pupils to develop good writing skills.
- Not all staff are skilled at asking questions that help pupils to explain their answers at length, nor in reshaping tasks to help all pupils understand new work
- Pupils are not always given the time to follow teachers' written advice and improve their work, nor do they have clear ideas about the steps necessary to reach the next level.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not done enough to improve the overall quality of teaching. Current leaders are starting to tackle this but it is too early to see the full impact of this work.

The school has the following strengths:

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress across all areas of learning as a result of good teaching. Progress in reading in Key Stage 1 is also good because teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is well focused.
- Governors are very committed and have recently begun to help leaders by setting more ambitious targets for pupils' progress.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Their families are confident that they are happy and feel safe.
- Provision in the school for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong with high levels of enjoyment of clubs and special events.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons or parts of lessons taught by four teachers. Additional activities included observations at break time, lunchtime and a school assembly.
- One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also made visits, including one with the headteacher, to a series of parts of lessons to observe how pupils were learning to recognise sounds and letters (phonics) and to look at the challenges set for more-able pupils.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, school leaders and subject leaders. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as views communicated during informal discussions with parents and carers and three letters received during the inspection. The views of the staff were gathered through meetings and from 18 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and examined the work in pupils' books.
- The school's own records on pupils' achievement for the current as well as previous academic years were checked, in addition to published information on pupils' achievement. Planning and monitoring documents, records relating to pupils' safety and welfare, including the school's single central record of checks on staff, and attendance records were also examined.

Inspection team

Patricia MacLachlan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fordcombe Church of England Primary School is much smaller than the average sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in one Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium (extra money provided by the government for certain groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals) is well below the national average.
- A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a very small number from other ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs or school action plus is in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is not currently in receipt of the additional government sports funding.
- The school, since the last inspection, has experienced turnover in staff. The headteacher was newly appointed in September 2013. The post of deputy headteacher was created in 2012 and literacy and mathematics leadership roles have also been formed since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - allowing enough time for pupils to respond to teachers' marking and record improvements to their answers in their books
 - helping pupils to identify for themselves the next steps that they need to take to improve their work and so meet higher levels of attainment
 - taking more opportunities to set tasks in a range of subjects, including science, that enable pupils to practise their writing skills and produce work that meets their literacy targets
 - making sure that the pace of learning is always brisk enough
 - developing the skills of staff to ask frequent and probing questions to help them assess pupils' understanding and to reshape tasks if necessary.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching by:
 - continuing to monitor teachers' planning to make sure that tasks for the pupils who are capable of making faster progress consistently incorporate open-ended challenges that will help them to attain higher levels.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because it is inconsistent across different year groups. Progress in mathematics by the end of Year 6 has been below the national expectation for some time. Achievement in reading by the end of Year 6, on the other hand, is good but this is not yet matched by consistent performance in writing, despite the fact that there were some pupils who attained the highest level (Level 6) in 2013.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils are now making more rapid progress and most of the current Year 2 are on track to reach the expected levels of attainment in reading and mathematics. Pupils' skills in reading are improving because of the good quality teaching of phonics.
- Systems have been strengthened for checking on the overall accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress. Progress information on all pupils is now checked regularly by the class teachers and leaders who now arrange for additional support to be provided for any pupils who are falling behind.
- In the lower Key Stage 2 year groups, recent evidence shows that progress is generally improving in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Most children join the school with skills that are in line with age-related expectations. With carefully planned teaching, they leave the Reception classes with levels of communication, language and literacy that are in line with, or above, the national average.
- The extra money provided under the pupil premium initiative is used for a range of booster sessions for pupils in the target group. As a result, pupils in receipt of the premium, particularly those in Years 2, 3 and 5 have narrowed the gap between their English scores and those of their classmates and now reach similar standards in reading. Pupils in receipt of the premium are currently three to six months behind their peers in their scores for mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs currently on roll make broadly the same progress as their classmates. Systems for checking their support and progress have been strengthened, leading to improved achievement for some.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not promoted consistently good progress, especially in mathematics, as a result of weaknesses over time in planning and assessment.
- The school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching shows that some in the past has had a negative impact on pupils' performance. Teaching has now improved, particularly in the younger year groups. This is improving pupils' achievement, but pupils are not yet making good progress over time in all years and subjects.
- When the pace of learning is brisk, pupils are fully engaged. For example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils were focused because they knew that they could be called upon to explain how they had made sentences that included plurals of nouns ending in 'o' ; they were keen to check their answers and improve their vocabulary. They were then further challenged to develop some general rules for making plurals along with a list of exceptions to those rules. However, not all teachers maintain such a rigorous pace, nor question so skilfully and consequently some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils who find the work difficult have gentle, focused support in class to help them make progress. However, the most-able pupils are sometimes set tasks that are not hard enough to help them to reach the higher attainment levels.
- Marking is thorough with useful written advice from teachers. However, some pupils do not follow up their teachers' suggestions and need more time to revise their work properly. Other pupils correct their work, but are nonetheless unclear about how to reach the next level.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Adults skilfully exploit the children's

interests. For example, in a story about dragons, staff posed stimulating questions about the models that the children had made that extended their creative thinking and use of vocabulary.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They want to live up to their teachers' expectations and they value the recognition and house rewards that come from behaving well. Pupils of all ages work very cooperatively with each other. Behaviour is good rather than outstanding because pupils' attitudes to learning are not exemplary across all classes.
- Pupils feel well looked after by the adults around them and say that their teachers 'are fun'. Well-mannered, courteous behaviour is typical because the pupils want to live up to the school's values and this is seen for example in the way that even the youngest pupils share the playground equipment and make sure that everyone is included in group activities.
- Pupils understand what bullying means. They believe that the number of incidents has declined and speak of the ways in which help from adults is forthcoming if there is any unkind behaviour. Pupils themselves are proud of acting as 'buddies' to help and comfort the younger children.
- Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety, including cyber safety, because it is well covered in lessons as well as through visits from police officers.
- A good range of well-attended sports teams including netball and tag rugby, along with well-used playground apparatus and a popular 'fit trail', help to promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Attendance is improving steadily each year because effective strategies are now used to reduce absences among a small group whose families find it difficult to maintain good attendance.
- Parents and carers believe that the school provides a safe and caring environment and inspectors agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are very pleased with the play equipment and clubs that have been provided for them.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management are not good because, despite setting more ambitious targets and steering improvements in the quality of teaching, leaders have not yet fully reversed weaknesses in achievement, particularly in the upper years of Key Stage 2.
- The energetic headteacher and his leadership team are beginning to raise the standard of teaching. This has had some recent and positive impact on pupils' progress but, as the leadership team's own monitoring shows, improvements are not yet consistent across the school.
- Subject leaders have been instrumental in recent improvements through analysing pupils' performance and checking their books. They are helping colleagues to increase their expertise in marking using a recently introduced marking policy. This has yet to be fully implemented because pupils are not yet consistently clear about the precise steps necessary to improve their work.
- The school's self-evaluation shows that leaders are aware of the areas requiring improvement, indicating the school's capacity to improve. The current staff are supportive of the drive for improvement.
- The headteacher has introduced a robust and detailed system for monitoring performance and uses the Teachers' Standards for teachers' review. The system makes sure that only those teachers who meet required standards move up the salary scale. The headteacher has not shied away from difficult conversations about teaching performance when necessary.
- Encouragement of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is planned in the curriculum. Pupils express moral viewpoints in the prayers that they write, for example, for school assemblies. The 'Fordcombes's Got Talent' wall is used to celebrate sporting and cultural achievements. Opportunities to perform as Vikings or participate in workshops on India and Jamaica widen cultural horizons. The wide range of well-attended clubs and eagerly anticipated

residential visits build social confidence.

- Management of the Early Years Foundation Stage shows a good understanding of, and support for, progress at this age. Arrangements for transition from home or nursery to school are sensitively handled.
- Safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and policies are systematically reviewed. Leaders promote equal opportunities and are assiduous in tackling any discrimination that may arise.
- Coherent plans, including for the purchase of new equipment and for staff training, have been made for allocating the additional government sports funding when it is received.
- The local authority assists the school with governor training and by supporting the headteacher with lesson observations.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The strongly committed governing body has reorganised itself in order to better understand and monitor the standards of achievement and teaching in the school. The headteacher provides regular summary reports under these headings, after pupil progress meetings. Governors have an understanding of how pupils are performing compared with national standards because they use the data dashboard reports and some have attended training in tracking pupils' progress in the school compared with national figures. Governors understand the link between teachers' pay progression and their pupils' progress because they have revised the appraisal policy and receive summaries of teachers' performance from the headteacher. Checks are made that the pupil premium funds are spent on the intended groups because the school leadership reports on the impact on attainment made by the funds. Oversight of safeguarding is systematic and the governing body is beginning to take a strategic role by checking the school development plans drawn up by the new headteacher.

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	118719
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426485

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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Finch
Headteacher	Chris Blackburn
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2011
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