

St John's CofE (C) Primary School

Wombourne Road, Swindon, Dudley, DY3 4NB

Inspection dates

5–6 November 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

- Pupils' progress requires improvement in English and mathematics. It varies too much across the school and mirrors inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Teachers do not always set work that provides suitable challenge for all groups of pupils or which is clearly linked to what they want pupils to learn by the end of a lesson. As a result, some pupils lose interest and engage less well with their learning.
- In some lessons, teachers do not check pupils' progress closely enough or comment precisely enough on what pupils have learnt. Similarly, some of the teachers' marking does not make it quite clear what pupils have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers do not give enough opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their speaking skills or their calculation skills in solving mathematical problems.
- Pupils' achievement is held back when teachers do not focus enough on increasing pupils' understanding of the underlying meaning of the texts they read.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Checks made by senior leaders and governors do not focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement.
- The actions in the school's plan for development are not precise enough to help it secure speedy improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's assessment of the school's overall performance is generally accurate.
- As a result of good teaching in Nursery and Reception, children do well in these year groups and get a good start to their education.
- Pupils' writing is getting stronger because it has been a priority for improvement.
- The teaching of phonics (learning the sounds that letters make) is improving reading across the school.
- Most pupils behave acceptably and feel safe at school.
- Most of the parents who spoke to the inspector during the inspection spoke warmly about the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons or parts of lessons, including two observed with the headteacher. He looked at a small sample of pupils' written work with the headteacher to obtain a view of pupils' current achievement and progress over this term.
- Meetings were held with one randomly selected groups of pupils, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, as well as senior and subject leaders. The inspector held a discussion with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's own data concerning pupils' current and recent progress, the school's summary of its self-evaluation, the local authority's review of the school's performance, planning and monitoring documentation, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspector took into account the 22 responses to the online Parent View survey, together with the school's own evidence of parents' views collected over time. Additionally, he talked informally to seven parents on the second day of the inspection.
- The inspector considered 12 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. It has four mixed-age classes.
- Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action is below average. The proportion of those who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is slightly below average. This is extra funding provided by the government to support certain groups of pupils. In this school, it applies only to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- Part-time Nursery provision is provided in the mornings. The governing body manages the provision and it was inspected as part of the inspection.
- The school had fewer than 11 pupils in the Year 6 cohorts in 2012 and 2013 and so government floor standards are not applicable at this school.
- The school has experienced staff changes and absence since the last inspection. A Key Stage 1 teacher has left and the special educational needs coordinator is currently absent due to a personal injury. The headteacher is acting as the interim special educational needs coordinator.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better, so that pupils achieve well, by making sure that teachers:
 - set tasks that are clearly linked to what pupils are expected to learn in lessons and which are well matched to meet the needs of different groups, so that all pupils are fully engaged with their learning
 - check closely and comment precisely on pupils' learning and progress in lessons
 - mark pupils' work to show them what they have achieved in relation to the goals set for them and guide them clearly on how they could improve it.
- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop clarity and fluency in their speaking skills across the curriculum.
 - ensuring that pupils are expected to read with a greater understanding of the text in different subjects
 - building teachers' subject knowledge in the teaching of mathematics and increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in solving practical problems.
- Strengthen the capacity of leaders, managers and governors by ensuring that:
 - senior and subject leaders make rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on the progress of different groups during their lesson observations and reviews of pupils' written work
 - actions designed to implement plans for improvement are precise enough to lead to the desired improvements
 - governors refine their monitoring skills to find out things about the school's performance for themselves so that they are able to challenge senior leaders more effectively to tackle weaknesses.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress varies across the school and has not been rapid enough across Key Stages 1 and 2. Although achievement is improving, the picture remains too inconsistent across the school for pupils' achievement to be good.
- Due to uneven progress and small cohorts, standards in English and mathematics tend to fluctuate. Currently, they are showing a rise after a steep dip in 2013 at the end of Years 2 and 6, that was partly due to the much higher proportion of pupils than the national average who had specific learning needs. Progress usually speeds up as pupils move through the school, but overall it still requires improvement in both key stages from pupils' starting points in Years 1 and 3.
- Pupils' speaking skills are underdeveloped. They are keen to talk with each other and respond to teachers' questions, but many of them do not express themselves with clarity and fluency. Adults do not always make the best use of opportunities to strengthen pupils' speaking skills.
- In mathematics, pupils' progress requires improvement. Most pupils are able to make routine calculations, but they do not always understand the underlying idea behind them. As a result, their skills in solving mathematical problems are not as strong as they need to be.
- Progress in pupils' knowledge of phonics is getting stronger across the school. As a result, reading is improving and most pupils are confident in sounding out and building unfamiliar words. At the end of Year 1, an above-average proportion achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2013. However, across the school, some pupils do not always understand the underlying meaning of the texts they read.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make uneven progress that requires improvement. The headteacher, as interim special educational needs coordinator, has already embarked upon ensuring that support for them meets their individual needs more accurately. The most-able pupils make at least the progress they should; currently an increasing number of them are on target to achieve the higher grades.
- In Year 6, the number of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is too small to report on their relative attainment without identifying individual pupils. Across the school, pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium are given extra support through one-to-one and small-group activities. Most of them make at least the progress they should in English and mathematics. The headteacher and governors have already deployed an additional skilled teacher to assess and meet their specific needs more accurately, and to speed up their progress.
- Pupils' progress in writing is stronger than in reading. Most can craft sensible sentences which are correctly punctuated. Their choice of vocabulary improves as they move through the school.
- Children in Nursery make a good start from their starting points, which are usually below those that are typical for their age. Most of them continue to make good progress in Reception. The proportion of children reaching and exceeding the expected levels is close to the national picture in 2013. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- There have been staff changes and absence, and it is the lack of good teaching that holds back pupils' learning and progress.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, work planned does not provide the right level of challenge for all pupils. As a result, some pupils are not able to make the progress they should. Tasks teachers set are not always directly linked to what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. These shortcomings lead to some pupils' lack of engagement with their work.
- Teachers check pupils' progress during lessons, but this checking is not always sharp enough to provide precise guidance on how pupils could improve their work. This weakness is also evident in the marking of pupils' written work. Sometimes comments made are not clear about how pupils have made progress against the objectives for the lesson and the marking does not provide pupils with enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.
- The teaching of mathematics is not as strong as it needs to be. As a result, pupils' progress is held back in some lessons. However, the teaching of writing has improved as a result of strong leadership in English. Assessment of pupils' writing is now more consistent and pupils practise their writing in a range of subjects.
- Typically, teachers expect pupils to work hard in lessons. They provide numerous opportunities for pupils to work with their peers and they promote good relationships.
- In the lessons where teaching is most effective, teachers ask searching questions to test pupils' understanding and push it further. They have high expectations of pupils, which they make clear. The teaching assistants engage well with pupils and contribute fully to their learning.
- Teaching is consistently good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Adults plan activities that readily capture children's interest, and promote good relationships and attitudes. They are highly skilled in observing and assessing children's progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**requires improvement**

- In some lessons, a few pupils show a lack of concentration when teaching does not engage their interest. Nevertheless, most pupils are keen to learn and get on with their work.
- A few parents and pupils expressed concerns about unacceptable behaviour at school. However, in discussion with the inspector, pupils assured him that behaviour was generally good. Similar views were expressed by most of the parents he met during the inspection. The inspector saw no evidence to indicate that unacceptable behaviour is a common occurrence.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying might take, including name-calling and misuse of the internet. They say that bullying is rare and, if it happens, adults deal with it promptly. Pupils feel safe at school and most of their parents agree with this view.
- Most pupils relate well with their peers and adults. In Nursery and Reception, children play and work harmoniously in the classroom and outdoors.
- Attendance remains above average, although a few pupils are late in arriving at school. The headteacher has taken steps to check punctuality more closely.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The impact of leadership and management has not been consistently effective since the last inspection. Improvements in the teaching of writing, assessment of pupils' progress and the use of pupils' individual targets for learning are some of the notable successes, but inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' achievement still remain.
- Checks on teaching during lesson observations and the review of pupils' written work do not focus sharply enough on the impact teaching has on pupils' progress, particularly of different groups. The lack of this rigour leads to a somewhat generous view of the quality of teaching in the school.
- The current school development plan has the right priorities for securing improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. These are based on the headteacher's generally accurate view of the school's performance and reflect the school's emerging capacity for improvement. However, some of the actions linked to the priorities are not precise enough to secure the desired improvements.
- The analysis of pupils' progress is systematic. It enables senior leaders to allocate extra help to support vulnerable groups and to ensure that they are fairly treated. The performance of different groups is now regularly reviewed because senior leaders recognise that the support provided is not yet fully effective for a few pupils.
- The current arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are clearly designed to take into account the contribution teaching makes to pupils' achievement, and inform decisions on teachers' pay.
- The range of taught subjects and activities are rightly focused on the development of pupils' basic skills. The school has made appropriate plans to use the new primary school sport funding and evaluate its impact. External coaches are deployed to strengthen the teaching of physical education and pupils' participation in a wider range of activities.
- The school's broad curricular provision for pupils includes enrichment activities, such as music, dance, sport, educational visits and visitors to school. Links are being established with an inner-city school to enhance pupils' awareness of cultural diversity. Together with the basic curriculum, these activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Most parents are well satisfied with the care staff show for their children. They find the school welcoming and approachable.
- The local authority provides worthwhile support by jointly reviewing the school's performance with senior leaders. Recently, it has increased its practical support to improve classroom practice and the leadership and management of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although supportive, the governing body does not fully understand the extent of the school's weaknesses, particularly those concerning the quality of teaching and the achievement of different groups of pupils. Consequently, it has not been able to hold senior leaders to account for them. Governors recognise that they need to acquire further skills and to do more to find out about the school's performance for themselves. The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. It fully understands the need to link any future increases in teachers' pay with their performance and pupil outcomes.

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	124278
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	429965

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	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Pincher
Headteacher	Donna Calloway
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2012
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