

# Ashton St Peter's VA CofE School

Leighton Court, Dunstable, LU6 1EW

## Inspection dates

6–7 November 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The experienced headteacher, with good support from knowledgeable staff and a strong governing body, work well together as a team. They make sure that teaching and achievement are good.
- Leaders enable pupils to experience a rich and exciting range of subjects and other learning experiences.
- Excellent relationships and a welcoming, happy atmosphere are found everywhere.
- Good teaching overall, and some which is outstanding, ensures pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average by the end of Year 2 and remains strong by Year 4.
- Behaviour is good and often excellent. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and each other. They play and work well together.
- Helpful support for all groups of pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, enables all to achieve well.
- Children in Reception make good progress. They enjoy a wide range of interesting indoor and outdoor activities which engage and motivate them.
- The school enjoys positive relationships with parents. All who expressed a view said they would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and are proud of it.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, although above average, is not as high as it has been.
- Pupils are not always given time to respond to teachers' helpful written comments on their work.
- Subject leaders' understanding of how well pupils are achieving is not always accurate enough for them to take action to improve pupils' performance where necessary.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, eight of which were observations shared with the headteacher.
- The inspector listened to some Year 1, Year 2 and Year 4 pupils read. The inspector also visited a school assembly and talked informally with pupils on the playground at break time. The work in pupils' books was seen.
- Discussions were held with two groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. A telephone call was made to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered the view of parents contained in the 31 online responses to the Parent View questionnaire as well as a summary of parental opinion conducted by the governing body. A very small number of letters received from parents were also reviewed.
- The views of teaching and non-teaching staff expressed in the 13 responses to their questionnaire were considered.
- A range of documentation was examined including information on: safeguarding, the progress and attainment of pupils, the school's view of its own performance and plan for improvement, minutes of the governing body's meetings and records of monitoring of pupils' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Valerie Palmer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Ashton St Peter's VA C of E School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils, those with a statement of educational needs and those who need extra support at school action plus are below average. The proportion of disabled pupils supported at school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (pupil premium) is below average. In this school, the pupils involved are those known to be eligible for free school meals or are in the care of the local authority.
- The governing body provides a daily breakfast club.
- The school is due to add educational provision for pupils in Years 5 and 6 from September 2014.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - giving time for pupils to respond to teachers' written comments so that they learn how to improve and extend their learning
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy and calculation skills in other subjects through open-ended, problem-solving activities so as to raise their attainment in mathematics.
- Make subject leaders more effective by ensuring they fully understand pupils' rates of progress and standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school, so they can contribute more directly to raising pupils' achievement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When children start school they usually have skills and understanding in line with those expected for their age. They settle well and enjoy many varied and engaging activities in a rich learning environment. Their positive experience enables them to make good progress in their first year at school. Consequently, pupils enter Year 1 with standards generally above national average levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils continue to progress well throughout Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain securely above the national average. Writing is particularly strong.
- Children develop an understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) early in Reception. Good communication with parents through homework books means reading is enjoyed at home. Pupils continue to make good progress in reading in Year 1. An above-average proportion has attained the required standard in the national screening check for reading in Year 1 since the check was introduced. By the end of Year 2, pupils tackle difficult words with confidence and read with expression.
- This enjoyment of reading continues into Key Stage 2. Pupils are able to discuss why they like certain authors and can talk confidently about the books they have chosen and read. They make good progress and, at the end of Year 4, pupils' achievement in reading is well ahead of the standards usually found at this age.
- Writing skills remain very strong by the end of Year 4. Pupils make good progress through carefully structured work pitched at the correct level which results in confident writers from an early age. This was clearly seen in Year 1 where pupils were given a number of resources to support their independent writing skills for re-telling a story. The teacher gave detailed, on-going feedback to all pupils and other adults skilfully gave assistance at the correct moment to ensure every pupil achieved maximum success.
- At the end of Year 4, pupils show competence in using mathematics. Progress overtime is good, but standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are not as high as they have been. This decline has been identified through the school's own evaluation and it is looking at strategies to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy and calculation skills in other subjects through open-ended, problem-solving activities to address the weakness. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of the action taken.
- The few pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding have additional help in lessons, small group and/or one-to-one support. Additional resources are allocated to ensure they can attend extra activities made available to other pupils. Year 2 pupils in 2013 made good progress and achieved standards slightly above their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in other year groups achieve standards broadly in line with other pupils and make similar progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported very effectively either through additional support within the classroom, small groups and/or one-to-one assistance so they make good and, sometimes, better progress than that of others.
- The few pupils of minority ethnic heritage and who speak English as an additional language generally make even better progress and achieve higher standards than their peers in English

and mathematics.

- Engaging and challenging work ensures that the most-able pupils achieve well. This was demonstrated in a Year 4 lesson, which fully engaged pupils by initially weighing a number of bags and measuring lengths of ribbon then rapidly moved on to answering one- and two-part problems based on the results obtained.

### **The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. Most teaching is engaging, frequently involves practical activities, challenges all pupils, including the most able, builds on previous knowledge and moves learning forward at a brisk pace.
- Teaching assistants work well with teachers and ensure pupils' good progress. Assistants are knowledgeable, adapt work for all abilities, ask probing questions and make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning. They successfully work inside and outside the classroom, lead catch-up groups in all subjects and help pupils with reading skills.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Effective planning of learning ensures that the needs of all children are catered for. They are helped to investigate and explore different learning situations through a range of practical and fun activities designed to stimulate and engage them.
- Teachers use questions well and discussions are used to deepen pupils' knowledge and extend their thinking. In a thought-provoking lesson in Year 3, pupils were asked to consider what questions they would like to ask the goddess Lakshmi and their classmates were asked to suggest possible answers. The experience encouraged good speaking and listening skills while instilling confidence.
- Learning in lessons is well planned and includes imaginative activities to motivate and interest pupils. The topics covered appeal to both boys and girls. Graph work in Year 2 was enhanced by the quantities of cakes required to stock a shop and the choice needed to supply the school.
- Teachers make sure pupils are aware of the targets for improvement set in English and mathematics and know how to achieve them. Pupils respond well and are keen to be successful so they are motivated to move onto the next target, but have not yet had enough opportunities to enhance their mathematical skills across all subjects.
- Teachers monitor pupils' work by frequently checking progress and understanding throughout lessons. They celebrate pupils' achievements through positive marking in pupils' books and, since September, are beginning to make more detailed comments on how pupils can improve their work. At present, this practice is more effective in English than in mathematics and pupils are not always given time to respond to the comments made.

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

- Behaviour in lessons and around school is typically good and often exemplary. Pupils are confident, articulate and happy. They concentrate well in lessons and are proud of their school. Occasionally, when lessons are not so engaging, their concentration begins to drift.

- Pupils say they get on very well together. They understand about unkind words and bullying. They are confident that a member of the school council will help them, or an adult will sort out any concerns if they cannot resolve a problem for themselves. They are aware of road safety and the dangers posed by water and electricity but appear less sure about those related to using the internet.
- The school cares and nurtures every pupil. It ensures that every pupil is valued and pupils say that they are well looked after by all adults. Most pupils say they feel safe at school and that upsets are very rare. They say, 'It's a nice place to be – lots of work. We love it.'
- Children in Reception are able to take turns, share and support one another in a range of situations. Children were seen helping one another to make rockets and fireworks using a variety of media and then cooperatively working out the best way to hang them from a tepee.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Pupils listen respectfully to each other's views during class discussions and when working in pairs. School councillors take their responsibilities seriously. They ensure that the 'worry box' is opened regularly and they resolve any issues through talking to pupils in class or in assembly.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved and is currently high. There have been no exclusions for a number of years.
- Parents responding to the Parent View survey and in letters received by the inspector unanimously say their children are safe, happy, well looked after and that pupils behave well. Inspection findings endorsed these positive views.

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

- The headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher and staff, ensures the values of respect for others and tolerance are reflected in excellent relationships across the school. She also leads the school well to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school development plan, based on the school's accurate self-evaluation, identifies the current strengths in teaching and achievement and the key priorities for development.
- Subject leaders regularly evaluate the quality of teaching, check on pupils' work across their subjects and are well placed to make valuable contributions to improvement initiatives. They are skilled in teaching their subjects and mentor staff to ensure that they feel confident in their delivery.
- The headteacher has established effective systems to track pupils' progress and the standards they achieve. However, subject leaders are not sufficiently familiar with the information available on pupils' progress and attainment to be able to use it to full effective impact on improving pupils' achievement. They have the training to do so, but insufficient opportunity to practise the skills involved.
- Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure that children achieve well and make good progress.
- Systems to manage staff performance are good. The headteacher rigorously evaluates the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers are conscious of the link applied between pupils' achievement and salary progression. Targets for staff to reach are set and reviewed annually.

Training to support teachers' professional development is firmly established.

- Links with parents are strong. Parental volunteers are welcomed into school and help on a regular basis with reading, sewing and trips. There is a weekly newsletter which keeps them informed of the day-to-day events supported by a comprehensive website showing the varied activities which take place. Following a parental survey, the school has responded by adding additional opportunities for parents to come into school and see their children's work and the progress they are making.
- The stimulating curriculum contributes well to pupils' positive attitudes to learning. It is enhanced by a residential visit, visits in and around the locality and visitors to school. Pupils support the education of a child in Kenya and other charities. They have access to many activities outside school, such as gardening, art, music and sport. These learning opportunities give strong support to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The new funding for primary sport and physical education has been allocated to provide a wider range of sporting opportunities, such as gymnastics and yoga, and to extend the range of competitive and non-competitive sports available to pupils. Opportunities to develop pupils' leadership skills through becoming sports leaders are planned, but it is too soon to evaluate the impact of these initiatives.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides the school with an appropriate level of support and recognises, correctly, that the school is doing well.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body provides good support for the school. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and monitor the progress of the school development plan. They closely analyse the headteacher's performance and have retained the School Improvement Partner to help them with this. They are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and reward good performance based on teachers' success in helping pupils to achieve well. They are well informed about pupils' progress and achievements through the comprehensive information supplied to them by the headteacher and challenge with relevant questions pertaining to this analysis. They show a sound understanding of performance data on pupils' progress and attainment. They are clear about the implications of budgetary requirements and know how the pupil premium funding is spent and its impact on eligible pupils' achievement.

## 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>	109703
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425350

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>	5–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	149
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ruth Banton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Shirley McGinty
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 November 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 663410
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