

St Germans Primary School

School Lane, St Germans, King's Lynn, PE34 3DZ

Inspection dates

7–8 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		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

- Although attainment is rising, it is not yet consistently above average in all subjects.
- Progress is too variable across Key Stage 2. It is not always as good in reading as it is in writing and mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement. Pupils are not consistently challenged in lessons to reach the highest levels in their work.
- Teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are not consistently high and work in lessons is not always closely matched to their ability levels, especially for the more-able pupils.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly, but they do not always respond by correcting their errors.
- Leadership and management are helping to improve achievement and teaching, but have not been strong enough to make sure they are consistently good.
- Leaders and governors have not yet refined their systems for monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils so they can quickly identify any potential underachievement.
- Staff do not have enough opportunities to share their best skills in the classroom, or learn from the work of teachers in other schools.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and standards are rising in Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced well in different subjects.
- Behaviour is good and attendance is above average. The school is working hard to ensure that pupils' attitudes to learning are always good.
- Pupils support each other in and out of lessons and feel safe. They value opportunities to help the school by serving on the school council.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developing well.
- Subject leaders are improving the effectiveness with which they monitor teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine lessons taught by five staff. He also observed activities to support individuals or small groups of pupils, and listened to pupils reading. Three joint observations of teaching were carried out with the executive headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher in charge of the day-to-day running of the school, staff, members of the governing body and a group of pupils. He spoke with parents in the playground before school, and with a representative of the local authority by telephone during the inspection.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspector took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 11 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspector observed the school's work. He also looked at the school's development plan, data on pupils' progress and achievement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a wide range of policies and procedures, and arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils. The inspector attended an assembly.
- Pupils' books were examined in lessons, and separately along with senior staff.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It has nearly doubled in size over the last few years.
- The school is part of the Wiggenhall Federation with another local primary school, which was inspected at the same time by another inspector. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of the federation.
- The very large majority of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for particular groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently at least good by:
 - providing consistently challenging activities in lessons, including for the most able pupils
 - improving the pace of lessons so that learning is consistently brisk and no time is lost
 - direct teachers' questions at individuals to probe and extend understanding, rather than to the class as a whole
 - identifying and learning from the best classroom practice within the school and in other schools
 - ensuring that all comments made in marking are followed up by pupils.
- Raise achievement in English and mathematics by using the improvements outlined above in teaching to:
 - refine pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make)
 - improve writing in Key Stage 1, particularly in spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - accelerate progress in reading in Key Stage 2
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to work independently and work problems out for themselves in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - using data more effectively to promptly identify any possible underachievement, especially where any pupils' progress is not as quick as it should be
 - tracking the achievement of different groups over time even more carefully
 - developing better links with parents, and keeping them well informed about how well their children are progressing and how they can help support learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because attainment, by the time pupils leave, has been variable over time and too often below the national averages, particularly for more-able pupils at the highest levels. Although the rate of progress made by more-able pupils is improving quickly, it is still not yet consistently high at every key stage. High pupil mobility in recent years, together with small cohorts, has contributed to these variations.
- Achievement in Key Stage 1 is improving but is not consistently good and too few pupils make really rapid progress in all subjects. Results have often been below national averages. Progress improved in 2013 and results were the best the school has seen for five years but even so, reading and writing were only just above national averages. Improvement in these subject areas has generally lagged behind that seen in mathematics.
- Pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds that letter make) is not always secure. Results in the Year 1 screening check on phonics rose considerably in 2013 to above national levels from below the national average in the previous year. The school has increased its emphasis on phonics across the school as part of the effort to improve reading and writing skills and to secure consistently good achievement.
- Key Stage 2 results vary considerably from year to year. Results were above average in English and mathematics in 2012 but lower in 2013, where fewer pupils matched national averages for English and mathematics combined. Current school data suggest that 2014 results are likely to be higher than in 2013.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium are now making similar progress to their classmates. They are still on average two terms behind in reading, and only a little closer in writing and mathematics. Gaps are closing, but slowly. Funding has been used to provide additional individual and small group support, a pastoral care assistant and booster sessions in school time.
- Older pupils' progress in reading is not as rapid as in mathematics or writing. Pupils read regularly in school, and value the opportunity to change books whenever they have finished one. Reading logs are used to encourage shared reading at home in Key Stage 1, though not always successfully. Many pupils read with increasing fluency as they move up through the school, but for a minority of pupils reading remains an area of relative difficulty.
- Children have joined the school in recent years with knowledge and skills increasingly in line with, and sometimes above, the levels typically found in this age group. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress towards most of the early learning goals, especially in literacy, mathematics and understanding the world.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make similar progress to other groups of pupils. Support through small group and one-to-one sessions is helping these pupils become more confident and skilled in key aspects of literacy and numeracy.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching observed during the inspection varied equally between good and requiring improvement. No outstanding or inadequate teaching was observed.

- In the weaker lessons pace and challenge are not consistently high enough, especially for the more-able pupils. Lesson plans are prepared, but in these lessons work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' abilities for them to progress quickly. As a result, opportunities for them to work independently, particularly in writing and mathematics, do not fully engage pupils to produce their best work or make them want to explore the potentially exciting topics further.
- Teachers use electronic technologies well in lessons, and some make good use of targeted questions to assess pupils' understanding. In some lessons, however, questions are directed to the whole class so the teacher is not in a position to test individual pupils' understanding.
- Teachers usually work effectively with support staff to take learning forward in the classroom. The best practice, for example the brisk pace and challenge seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage, is not yet consistently shared within the school or observed in other schools to ensure that all teaching is good or better.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and some teaching is good. In a well-taught lesson in Year 5 and 6, for example, the teacher made good use of the school's 'learning pyramid' system to get pupils to assess how well they were performing and decide what activity they had to tackle next. Pupils were able to work at the correct level and to move their skills on quickly as a result. In other lessons, however, expectations are not always high enough.
- Teaching assistants work closely with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They generally ensure that they make at least similar progress to their classmates, and sometimes better.
- The teaching of reading is improving. The school has reviewed this area in an attempt to reinforce pupils' skills with additional work on spelling, punctuation, grammar and the links between sounds and letters. Teachers and support staff are also working to address the remaining gaps in communication, writing and mathematical skills.
- Teachers encourage pupils to present their work carefully across the school and mark their work regularly. Recent initiatives have led to more consistent use of comments about how pupils can improve their work to take it forward. Teachers' comments are not always followed up by pupils, which means that their learning does not always progress as fast as it should.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. They listen respectfully to each other and to adults, and take seriously their role as members of the school council.
- Pupils are clear about how they are expected to behave because they understand the school's systems well. They know that good behaviour is rewarded, and that there are sanctions if the expected standards are not met.
- The school is now focusing more strongly on encouraging pupils to advance their learning by working ever more independently, or taking responsibility for learning in their classroom by leading in a group or presenting their findings to others.
- Pupils feel safe in school and their parents agree. Pupils think that behaviour is good and that bullying of any sort is rare. They know about the different forms bullying might take and how to stay safe on the internet. Pupils affirm that any incidents are quickly sorted out, and that they can always turn to an adult in school for support and advice. Pupils are quick to offer support to each

other.

- Pupils are punctual to school. They enjoy school and speak highly of the range of activities in which they can participate, including breakfast and after-school clubs. These clubs reinforce pupils' skills in the different subjects they study, for example by providing additional games relating to literacy or numeracy.
- Attendance is above average. Holidays in term time are discouraged. There have been no exclusions or racist incidents in recent times. Any incidents related to behaviour are logged electronically, which allows the school to analyse them by type or frequency. The school has recently appointed a pastoral care assistant as part of its work with pupils and families.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although the headteacher and senior staff have worked steadily to improve attainment and teaching as key priorities, gains in these two key areas are not yet sufficiently embedded to ensure achievement is consistently good. The school recognises that further work is required to ensure all teachers have the very highest expectations of the progress that pupils ought to be making.
- Monitoring procedures are improving but are not yet fully systematic. The use of data to identify any possible underachievement is still developing to ensure consistently rapid progress for all pupils but some work remains to be done. Although leaders are increasingly looking closely at individual and group progress they do not analyse progress rates over time effectively enough.
- Staff are supportive of the drive for improvement and work closely with fellow staff in the neighbouring federated school. Subject leaders, two of whom are on the senior team in the federation, are developing their leadership of teaching and learning, for example through joint work across the federation. Dialogue between colleagues is facilitated by regular pupil progress meetings and increased access to staff training.
- Staff know that they are accountable for pupils' achievement in their classes, and that pay rises and promotion will be linked to good teaching and pupils' progress.
- The school offers a broad range of subjects, many linked to exploring the local area and its heritage. Literacy and numeracy skills are regularly reinforced in other subjects, for example when pupils were asked to speak and write about a journey in a religious education lesson. Pupils' learning is carefully linked to what they might do in the world outside. For example, in a session on bread-making in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children could relate the activity to what they might see at home.
- The school has put together a well-considered plan to make best use of the new national funding for developing physical education. This includes clear links to healthy eating and living and opportunities for pupils to try a wider range of sports, and will involve close cooperation with a range of external agencies and other providers.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning are developed well. A puppet show during the inspection on Biblical themes to a highly attentive audience was one way in which pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is enhanced. The school is looking at ways to reinforce pupils' understanding of other cultures by further visits and visitors.
- The school has close links with the local authority, which is monitoring attainment and progress.

- Leaders have increased links with parents through the Parent Forum to keep them well informed, while recognising that there is still some work to be done in this area. The very small number of parents who responded to the online survey are supportive of the school, but half of those responding felt that communication with leaders and managers needs improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a good variety of skills to their role and visit regularly. Some have given long service to the school. They have a secure understanding of what performance data tell them about how well pupils are achieving, but are planning to have further training to help them raise standards even more rapidly through quicker identification of where progress is too slow. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent and check on the effectiveness of that spending. They have ensured that arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are rigorous, are linked to the school's priorities for improvement and are improving the quality of teaching. They also make sure that safeguarding procedures meet all current national requirements.

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	120891
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	425322

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Alford
Headteacher	Alison Hughes
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2012
Telephone number	01553 617246
Fax number	N/A
Email address	office@st-germans.norfolk.sch.uk

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