

Ticehurst and Flimwell Church of England Primary School

Steellands Rise, Ticehurst, TN5 7DH

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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

- Too few pupils make consistently good progress across the school.
- The quality of teaching over time has not been good enough to ensure that all pupils realise their potential.
- Governors rely too much on the headteacher when it comes to analysing data about pupils' learning.
- The new leadership structure has not been fully implemented.
- The new vision for the school's improvement has not been sufficiently shared with parents.
- Subject leaders are not yet demonstrating enough self-reliance in driving improvements in teaching and learning.
- In lessons, the work and the pace of learning does not always meet pupils' needs. This is particularly true for the more able.
- While marking has improved, there are too few opportunities for pupils to reflect on, and respond to, the guidance they are given.
- In some lessons, openings for pupils to exercise independence and initiative by finding things out on their own are missed.
- The employment of a number of temporary teachers to cover staff absence has affected the continuity of teaching in some classes.

The school has the following strengths

- In the short time since her appointment, the headteacher has tackled underperformance rigorously and made many changes for the better.
- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher are a strong team and they are demonstrably improving teaching. As a result, more pupils are now making good progress.
- Teachers understand that they are accountable for pupils' progress. Staff work as a team and are committed to the success of every pupil. Nearly all of those who completed an inspection questionnaire were positive about the direction of the school.
- Positive relationships throughout the school ensure pupils have good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour around the school is good. They enjoy taking responsibility and helping each other.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in nine lessons and pupils' work was examined, especially in English and mathematics. Some observations were joint visits with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils and two members of the school's governing body. The inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the local authority. One meeting with pupils was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for pupils to read aloud.
- Informal discussions with pupils took place at breaks and lunchtimes.
- The inspector took account of the 66 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire. Parents' involvement in school life was discussed with senior leaders. At the beginning of one day, informal conversations were held with parents in the school playground.
- A range of documentation was looked at including records relating to pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- In this smaller-than-average size primary school, most pupils are White British. Few are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2013. An acting deputy headteacher, jointly funded by the school and the local authority, has been seconded to the school. In managing staff absence, there has been a considerable turnover of temporary staff in the last year.
- An independent pre-school and children's centre share the same site as the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and enables all pupils to make good progress by ensuring:
 - the work that is set is sufficiently demanding for all pupils
 - pupils work at a pace that is appropriate for them
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to take the initiative in learning and develop independence through investigation and solving problems on their own
 - pupils regularly reflect on, and respond to, guidance in marking.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - appointing a permanent deputy headteacher and stabilising staffing
 - extending the expertise of subject leaders in pinpointing how to improve teaching
 - developing governors' ability to analyse data independently
 - sharing the clear vision for the school's improvement with parents.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because their progress in Reception and as they move up the school has been variable and too slow. Teachers now have higher expectations and pupils' progress is improving but it is not yet good.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have made the same variable progress as their classmates. Provision for these pupils has been revised. Programmes of support are personalised and carefully evaluated to ensure impact. The progress of these pupils is now tracked closely and there is evidence that it is accelerating.
- Too many more-able pupils make only expected progress because they are not sufficiently stretched in lessons.
- In 2012, pupils eligible for the additional pupil premium funding did not achieve as well as their classmates, particularly in English. The use of this funding has been reviewed. A tutor has been appointed to give pupils one-to-one and small group tuition. In 2013, provisional data show that pupils eligible for the funding made good progress and attained as well as their classmates in reading and writing. In mathematics, they made good progress from their starting points but their attainment remains about a year behind their classmates.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average but standards are rising. Pupils' work and lessons observed during the inspection show that attainment in English and mathematics is strengthening.
- Children enter the school in Reception with levels of development close to that typical of their age. They settle in quickly and are very well looked after. More precise assessment and teaching are increasing the number of children making good progress. There is a systematic focus on developing reading, writing and mathematical skills and children are better prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Leaders and managers have focused well on improving reading across the school through daily group reading sessions and one-to-one support for some pupils. Pupils' understanding of letters and sounds (phonics) showed a marked improvement in the most recent Year 1 check. The development of the school library is already having an impact on pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Even younger pupils like to talk about their wider reading and favourite authors.
- Equality of opportunity is central to the school's values and Christian ethos. The few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language, are responding to improving teaching alongside their peers and are doing well. There is no discrimination within the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils are not always challenged appropriately, particularly the more able.
- Pupils are not in the habit of reflecting on the guidance they receive through marking and teachers do not structure opportunities for pupils to act on the good advice they give. The marking policy is mostly adhered to with teachers identifying what pupils are doing well and what they must do to improve their work.
- Sometimes learning is too teacher led. This limits opportunities for pupils to apply their learning, exercise choice and find things out for themselves. It also prevents pupils working at a pace that is right for them.
- Resources and the environment for learning are greatly improved. For example, the resources for practical activities in mathematics are helping pupils of all abilities to make better progress and understand how mathematics runs through our daily lives.

- Teachers and assistants work well together. The support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs observed in lessons during the inspection was good.
- Sharing planning and clearer leadership are increasing the range and quality of learning activities. In English, pupils have good opportunities for discussion. Reading is taught systematically and imaginative tasks develop pupils' understanding of the different purposes of writing.
- Pupils have a better understanding of what they must do to succeed in lessons. In one lesson observed, pupils were writing as different characters in the novel they were reading together. The teacher asked pupils to share their work and evaluate the quality of their writing against clear criteria for success. Consequently, pupils saw how to improve their work and made good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They like learning and have good relationships in lessons and around the school. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. In a few lessons, some pupils are passive because they are not encouraged to experiment with or use what they have learned.
- When children enter Reception, warm and caring relationships are established quickly and foster positive personal and social skills.
- Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and understand the part they play in maintaining the caring and harmonious atmosphere of the school. They help out by becoming play leaders (responsible for organising activities for other pupils at playtimes), buddies to younger pupils and school councillors.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and are clear about keeping themselves safe, for instance from cyber bullying. They believe that bullying is not a problem and are knowledgeable about the different types of bullying, including name-calling and racism. Pupils are confident that the adults will sort out any problems that may arise.
- A small number of parents raised concerns about bullying. The school's logs indicate that behaviour is typically good and bullying is uncommon and dealt with swiftly. Exclusions have been reduced considerably.
- Pupils talk about school life positively and are clear about the rewards and sanctions in the new behaviour management policy. Both staff and pupils recognise that the policy underpins the improvements made in behaviour in the last year.
- Pupils appreciate the enhanced school environment and the better equipment available in lessons and at playtimes. They love their well-kept class gardens and the school chickens.
- A well-established link with a school in Malawi extends pupils' understanding of different cultures and ways of living.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because systems within the school have not ensured that teaching secures pupils' good progress.
- The headteacher provides very clear direction. Until the secondment of an acting deputy headteacher to the school in September 2013, she had been driving improvements almost single-handedly. In addition to this, she has had to manage some complex staffing issues.
- The new, more appropriate leadership structure is not fully in place. However, there is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school based on a rigorous analysis of pupils' progress and close monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result standards are rising

and pupils' progress in both English and mathematics is accelerating.

- The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been clarified. They are enthusiastic and determined to improve outcomes for pupils but they are still gaining expertise in improving teaching in their areas.
- Some parents have been perturbed by the pace of recent changes because the very clear vision of improvement that is uniting staff has not yet been shared with them.
- There are good action plans for raising standards and improving teaching but it is too early to see their full impact. Nonetheless, recent improvements to teaching and achievement indicate that school leaders have shown the capacity to improve further.
- A detailed analysis of pupils' progress is now being used effectively to trigger timely interventions for pupils. It also informs the system of appraisal and performance management. All teachers have a performance objective that links to pupils' achievements.
- The school is developing its curriculum so that it is more creative. Increasingly, it provides exciting and meaningful experiences that captivate pupils.
- Pupils participate in varied and well-resourced physical and sporting activities that foster their health, well-being and social skills. Recent additional funding for sport is being used fittingly. For example, the skills of teachers are being extended through coaching in specialist activities. In addition, collaboration with other schools has provided more opportunity for competition which is developing pupils' confidence and aptitudes.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning are promoted well through activities in and outside the classroom.
- The local authority has intensified its effective support to the school. In particular, the secondment of the acting deputy headteacher has ensured the momentum of improvement has been sustained.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is increasing its effectiveness through training and reviewing how it can best support and challenge the school. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They are involved in checking the school's performance, including data that show pupils' attainment and progress. Some have received training in this aspect of their work which has improved their ability to hold the school to account but there is still too much reliance on the headteacher. Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and the performance of staff, including how good performance is rewarded, and any underperformance is tackled. The efficiency of spending is scrutinised, for instance the effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 114524 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 424590 |

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

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| 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 | 142 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Karen Marr |
| Headteacher | Fiona Sayers |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 July 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01580 200344 |
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