

Bishop's Castle Primary School

Oak Meadow, Bishop's Castle, SY9 5PA

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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 large majority of teaching is at least good.
- Overall, pupils make outstanding progress in reading and good progress in writing and mathematics.
- Provision for younger children is consistently good and all pupils are well prepared for their future learning, within school and beyond.
- Pupils' good and, sometimes, outstanding behaviour ensures that, at work and play, they are safe and enthusiastic partners in their education.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher ensures that every pupil is valued and treated as an individual.
- Subject leaders actively contribute to the drive for improvement by frequently reviewing pupils' learning in each subject. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is improving steadily.
- A wide range of activities, including assemblies, educational visits and community links, contribute very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's view of its strengths, and where further development is needed, is accurate.
- Parents and carers are very supportive. They hold the school in high regard and the vast majority say they would recommend the school to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in writing and mathematics, whilst above average overall, is not as high as it could be.
- Pupils do not write at length across all subjects and they do not confidently undertake investigations and problem-solving tasks in mathematics.
- Not all pupils, especially the more able, are given hard enough work to do.
- Pupils do not confidently know their targets and advice to move them to the next level is not precise enough.
- Governors are committed and hard working but the level of challenge they give to the school's leadership is not consistently focused on the progress of key groups.

Information about this inspection

- Eleven lessons or parts of lessons were observed. All classroom teachers present during the inspection were observed teaching. The inspector undertook two joint lesson observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and different groups of pupils.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, observed the teaching of reading skills and checked on pupils' reading in lessons.
- The inspector sampled pupils' work, scrutinised the school's tracking records of pupils' progress and took account of the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- The inspector held a discussion with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- The views of parents and carers were sought and the 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were examined. The inspector spoke with parents and carers, at various times, during the inspection.
- The views of staff were sought through a questionnaire. In total, 13 questionnaires were studied.

Inspection team

Gordon Ewing, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- There are five classes within this small school. Class 1 caters for children in Reception and Year 1. Class 2 caters for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Class 3 has only pupils in Year 3. Class 4 caters for pupils in Years 4 and 5, whilst Class 6 consists of pupils in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils come from a range of different heritage groups. The largest group, about nine tenths, is of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- A broadly average number of pupils is eligible for support from the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from families with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is close to the average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- 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?

- Raise levels of attainment and progress in writing and mathematics to those achieved in reading, by:
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length across a range of subjects
 - strengthening pupils' capacity to check the accuracy of their writing and in extending the range of vocabulary they use to bring added quality to their work
 - teaching pupils the range of steps and skills needed to solve mathematical investigations and challenges so that they develop independent methods to solve problems
 - ensuring that pupils use a range of methods to check their calculations so that they solve problems effectively and avoid errors.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that it is in the majority, by:
 - sharing and extending the existing outstanding practice across the school
 - ensuring that all teachers have a secure understanding of the components of outstanding learning by additional training and observing outstanding teaching in other schools
 - improving marking and verbal feedback that supports learning and ensuring that pupils understand and act on the guidance they receive
 - setting and regularly checking individual targets, especially in writing and mathematics, so that pupils know what to aim for and can track their own progress
 - making sure that teachers regularly monitor learning in lessons and set work that is hard enough, especially for the more able.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children start in the Reception class, their skill levels are below those expected for their age. This is particularly the case in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in Class 1 because all adults work seamlessly to create learning activities that are stimulating and well matched to each child's needs.
- Progress made in reading is especially strong. This is as a result of key changes to the teaching of reading throughout the school. The step-by-step teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) ensures that pupils rapidly develop secure reading skills.
- Results in national phonics screening checks in 2013 for Year 1 pupils were above average in their reading. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading is at least two terms ahead of their peers nationally.
- Levels of attainment in writing and mathematics have been steadily rising since the last inspection. As a result, they have been above average in the last two years by the end of Year 6. Current progress information indicates that these improvements are being sustained throughout the school.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make consistently good progress. The gap between their performance and that of other pupils has closed significantly so that, in 2013, the proportion making expected or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than that of other pupils. As a result, there was no gap in their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in comparison to other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar rates of progress to that of their peers overall. Inspection evidence shows some remarkable examples of how individual pupils, who face significant academic and personal challenges, have made impressive progress in their learning and personal development.
- Though rising steadily, attainment and progress in writing and mathematics lag behind that seen in reading. This is because, in writing, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to write at length in other subjects such as science, history and geography and, in mathematics, pupils are not taught systematically how to tackle investigations or to solve multi-step problems.
- Though more-able pupils make good progress overall, there is still more to do to accelerate their achievement, especially in writing and mathematics. In some lessons, their work is too easy.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in all subjects is typically good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is because leaders have taken concerted action to improve teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Teaching is strongest and most consistent in the classes which cater for the youngest and oldest pupils.
- Teaching in Class 1 is consistently good. All adults work to ensure that activities are specific to

each child. Children enjoy their activities and are encouraged to learn in groups and pairs as well as independently. In a well-taught numeracy lesson, children were learning to count up in twos and many could count to 20 with confidence. Some chose their own strategies to make sure that they were counting on accurately and explained to others how they achieved the task.

- In a literacy lesson in Years 5 and 6, teaching was outstanding and pupils were enthusiastically editing a piece of writing to make the vocabulary more powerful and vibrant. The teacher set out different levels of expectation and pupils rose to the varied challenges with vigour and purpose. They used a thesaurus and dictionary skilfully, and their vocabulary blossomed as a result. For example, one pupil wrote, 'As Wilf crept in as stealthily as a tiger...'. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed exploring and extending their vocabulary and achievement was strong.
- Most teaching assistants are given clear directions and clearly make a difference, particularly in small-group and one-to-one sessions. The deployment of teaching assistants in Class 1 is consistently good.
- The new funding for physical education and sport is already having clear impact. Teachers report that they are gaining in confidence in the teaching of gymnastics. The shared teaching sessions with the specialist coach are consolidating and rapidly extending their knowledge and skills.
- Good relationships are evident within and beyond the classroom. Pupils show good levels of concentration, perseverance and determination in their learning. This is the case even when the challenge, especially for the more able, is not as high as it could be.
- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not check on learning as it takes place and opportunities are sometimes missed to move pupils' learning forward rapidly. On occasions, pupils who have achieved a task easily or quickly are given more of the same rather than an activity that will extend their learning.
- Marking is generally up to date, positive and constructive. That said, teachers do not consistently provide feedback, in books and verbally, that helps pupils to improve their work. Teachers do not check that pupils understand and follow the guidance they receive. Pupils do not know their targets with confidence and some targets are too general.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to solve open-ended problems in mathematics. Furthermore, pupils are not consistently taught to systematically check through their work. For example, in writing, most pupils do not edit their work thoroughly without prompting and, in mathematics, pupils do not check the accuracy of their calculations using other methods. As a result, errors or possible improvements are often missed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the strong relationships that pervade the school contribute to a learning experience that is harmonious and rewarding.
- Pupils who have attended the school since Reception report that the good, and sometimes outstanding behaviour, observed during the inspection, is typical over time. They report that bullying is extremely rare and that adults care for them well and treat them as individuals and with respect. One pupil commented, 'It is a really good school.'
- Pupils agree with their parents and carers that they are very safe at school. They are confident about how to use the internet safely and understand that bullying takes different forms.

- It can be tricky comparing the attendance of pupils in a small school with that seen nationally because one pupil can make a big difference. That said, over time, attendance has been broadly average and recently is above that seen nationally.
- The school has clearly communicated core values essential to pupils' spiritual, moral and social skills. These are revisited and affirmed in lessons and assemblies. An outstanding whole-school assembly celebrated the personal attitudes and achievements of many pupils, and music and song engaged every pupil and adult. The strong sense of community was palpable.
- Pupils greatly appreciate all that the school offers and are proud of the part they play in its development; for example, in improving the range of play equipment and in taking on a variety of responsibilities around the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The determined and focused leadership of the headteacher has had a clear impact on moving the school from satisfactory to good.
- Since the last inspection, the school has taken specific action that has had a marked impact on outcomes. For example, attainment in reading has accelerated rapidly as a result of better teaching and the use of new resources. Alongside this, the trend of rising attainment in writing and mathematics has been sustained.
- Subject and team leaders have strengthened their understanding of the quality of teaching and how this shapes pupils' learning. Through observing lessons, teachers working in pairs in some lessons and checking on pupils' work frequently, they are now actively driving improvements forward.
- Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the school's strengths and have produced a comprehensive school development plan that is focused on the right priorities for improvement.
- Arrangements for checking teachers' performance are good and clearly linked to the standards expected nationally. Objectives set for each teacher are clear and linked to pupils' progress and whole-school targets. Governors have oversight of this process and vigorously ensure that any salary progression, including that of the headteacher, is based solely on merit.
- Pupil premium funding is well spent; for example, in providing additional teaching to boost language development for specific pupils. The progress of those eligible for the additional support compares favourably with that of similar pupils nationally.
- The curriculum, including the wealth of educational activities offered to all pupils, is vibrant and broad. Particular strengths include art, music, community activities and outdoor learning. For example, older pupils studying the geography of Snowdonia confidently reported that their school trip to the area made a real difference to their understanding of environment and conservation. The good curriculum is a key component in the strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- School displays celebrate the richness of pupils' experience ranging from studying Ghana and environmental issues in Africa to aboriginal culture and the art of Van Gogh. That said, displays of pupils' work in mathematics is not a strong feature across the school in either common areas

or in classrooms.

- The local authority has visited the school regularly to assess the school's progress and to support further development in key areas. This has been effective in ensuring the school has raised its game since the last inspection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors' regular visits and, for some, their long association with the school, ensure that they know the school well.
- Governors bring a range of skills and experiences to their role, including from the world of education. They work diligently to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that procedures for checking staff performance are robust and fair.
- Governors are beginning to strengthen their understanding of how pupils' progress is tracked and in ensuring pupil premium funding, and that recently provided to improve the teaching of physical education and support, are used to good effect. They are not afraid to ask questions of the school's leadership but acknowledge that these have not been focused precisely enough on the effectiveness of the school's work on the progress of key groups.
- Governors play an important role in the formulation of all policies and procedures and contribute fully to the school's evaluation of its work.
- Alongside all leaders, governors ensure that the promotion of equal opportunity is central to the school's work and that discrimination is never tolerated.

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	123354
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	428823

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	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Shepherdson
Headteacher	Andrew Barker
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2012
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