

St Margaret's C of E Primary School

The Mardens, Ifield, West Sussex, RH11 0AQ

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2014

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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement declined after the school's previous inspection, and improvement was initially too slow.
- Pupils do not always make as much progress as they could in lessons. This is because teachers do not always make sure pupils understand clearly what they are required to do or that they make sufficient gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants and other adults do not always play an active enough part in helping pupils to make progress in lessons.
- Teachers' marking comments are not always detailed enough to show pupils how to improve their work and teachers do not always give pupils opportunities to respond to written feedback.
- School leaders have not yet ensured that teaching is of a sufficiently high standard to enable pupils to make good progress.
- School improvement plans are not sufficiently detailed and precise about when planned actions will be completed, and how they will contribute to improvements in progress and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The rate at which pupils' progress is accelerating has risen significantly over the last year.
- The school is narrowing gaps in achievement between pupils who are eligible for pupil premium support and other pupils.
- The school's good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has resulted in it being a harmonious community in which pupils from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and well looked after in school and have few worries about bullying.
- Leaders at all levels and governors are strongly committed to raising standards and know what needs to be done to improve teaching and ensure that pupils achieve well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons, several of them together with school leaders, for varying amounts of time. They observed all the classes in the school and all 15 teachers, who were present during the inspection at least once. They made shorter visits to a number of other lessons and activities, looked at pupils' written work and listened to pupils read. Inspectors also attended two assemblies and visited one of the school's after-school clubs.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils, the Chair, Vice Chair and one other member of the Governing Body, members of staff and a representative of the local authority. They also held short informal discussions with several parents.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress, data on attendance and records relating to pupils' behaviour. They examined safeguarding procedures and records of the school's own lesson observations, as well as self-evaluation, performance management documentation and planning documents.
- Inspectors took account of 59 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, which were submitted before or during the inspection, as well as a letter from a parent. They also considered 26 questionnaires completed by members of the teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

Robin Gaff, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Fran Ashworth

Additional inspector

Matthew Klimcke

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- About one in eight pupils is eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for children in local authority care, children with a parent in the armed services and those known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is above the national average. About one in nine pupils is supported through school action. The proportion of pupils, about one in 11, supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has specially resourced provision in the Special Support Centre for up to eight disabled pupils.
- There is an on-site nursery which is managed by the school's governing body. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements.
- Since the school's previous inspection there have been several changes in staffing, including some involving staff holding positions of responsibility.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has been in post since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good, to enable pupils to make at least good progress from their starting points, by making sure that teachers always:
 - explain clearly to pupils the tasks they want them to carry out and check thoroughly that pupils understand them and complete them in good time
 - give pupils sufficiently detailed feedback about their work's strengths and weaknesses
 - make sure that pupils have understood and acted upon their feedback by giving pupils more opportunities to respond to teachers' marking
 - make sure that all teaching assistants clearly understand their role in each lesson, so that they can be more effective in helping pupils to make good progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels regularly check the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that it is enabling pupils to make good or better progress
 - improvement plans are always sufficiently precise and detailed in setting out time deadlines for the completion of planned actions and how their success will be judged in terms of improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because the progress pupils make from their starting points is still too variable, although improving.
- Children join the Reception class with levels of knowledge and skills which vary from year to year but which are usually broadly in line with those normally found in children of their age.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly average and has risen in recent years. However, the standards pupils reach by the time they leave the school, as shown by their results in national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2, fell in both reading and writing in 2012, although they rose slightly in mathematics. This shows that pupils did not make good progress in Years 3 to 6, especially in writing
- The school's data on the attainment and progress of current pupils shows that achievement is improving, including in writing. It shows that it varies too much between and within year groups and also across different subjects. This is because the quality of teaching is not consistent throughout the school and pupils have yet to overcome the negative impact of weak teaching in the past.
- In well-organised lessons, characterised by a real sense of purpose, pupils learn well, for example, in solving mathematical problems. However, when teachers do not explain tasks clearly to pupils or time is not well used, pupils make slower progress.
- Children in the Reception classes are now gaining a good grasp of phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and of number. They learn to play safely and to cooperate with one another, benefiting from teachers' understanding of this age group, their good use of questioning and their calm and caring approach. This is also much appreciated by parents.
- Current pupils in all year groups are making better progress in reading than in the past. They read widely and often use their phonics skills to good effect in recognising difficult words, and show a good understanding of what they are reading.
- The school makes good use of additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium to narrow the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils. The standards reached in the 2013 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics by pupils who were eligible for this extra support were just above those of similar pupils nationally and of other pupils in this school.
- The progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium was broadly in line with that of other pupils in the school and of similar pupils nationally, and the results of this group of pupils in 2013 showed that they had made more progress from their starting points than similar pupils in 2012.
- The most able pupils also made similar progress in 2013 to that made by comparable pupils nationally. Teachers usually give these pupils work that engages their interest and provides them with enough challenge.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress which is at least as good as that of their classmates and is improving. This is because the school now identifies quickly and accurately the barriers to learning which they face, some of which are considerable, and teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- The school's success in narrowing gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils, including pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language, demonstrates its effectiveness in promoting equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that pupils can make up previous lost ground and achieve well throughout the school.
- Teachers do not always explain activities clearly enough so that pupils know exactly what

teachers want them to do and what they expect pupils to learn. This results in pupils sometimes losing sight of the purpose of what they are doing, and teachers do not routinely check to see if pupils are finding tasks too hard or too easy. Lessons do not always proceed with a sufficient sense of urgency, and then pupils work too slowly and, sometimes, become distracted.

- The quality of the support given to pupils by teaching assistants is not consistent. Teaching assistants do not always have well-defined responsibilities in lessons, for example for lower-attaining pupils, and sometimes take too long to provide help where it is most needed.
- Most of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey believe that teaching is good. Inspection evidence did not confirm this view. However, it is improving significantly and this is having an increasingly positive impact on pupils' achievement. Inspectors' observations and their examination of pupils' work endorse this view.
- Teachers relate well to pupils and usually make sure that they behave well in lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they teach. This was apparent, for example, in a Year 2 lesson where pupils made good progress in learning to solve problems using a variety of equipment, including beads and coloured cubes. This gave pupils plenty of opportunities to practise, for instance, their counting skills. The teacher checked regularly to make sure that pupils understood what to do and were sticking to their task. She made good use of their responses in whole-class discussions to reinforce and to extend their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those enrolled in the Special Support Centre, are fully involved in classroom activities and benefit from extra assistance which helps them to make similar progress to all other pupils.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and accurately. They give pupils written feedback which acknowledges what they have done well and where they have gone wrong. They do not consistently make comments which are specific and detailed enough to ensure that pupils know exactly what to do to improve their work, or give them enough opportunities to show, in writing, that they have learned from their mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils, parents and members of staff express few reservations about pupils' behaviour and the ways in which the school manages it.
- Pupils strive to do their best even when teaching is not as interesting as it might be. They are keen to answer teachers' questions. They usually respond quickly to teachers' requests and instructions, for example to stop whatever they are doing and listen. Teachers have established good routines, such as clapping rhythms, for gaining pupils' attention.
- Pupils' attitudes to all aspects of learning are good. They work hard in lessons, although occasionally a few become distracted when teachers fail to engage or maintain their attention.
- Around the school and in the playground, pupils from different backgrounds relate well to one another, taking good care of younger and disabled pupils. They learn to appreciate difference and diversity, and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Pupils also respect the school environment. They help to keep classrooms tidy and to make sure that the school is litter-free.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Almost all parents, as well as pupils themselves, agree that this is the case.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, such as cyber bullying, and what to do if it happens. However, they say it is rare and is dealt with promptly and effectively by the school.
- Pupils learn to keep safe, for example, when running about in the playground, although school leaders recognise that the hard surface is uneven and can be slippery at times. A few pupils and parents expressed minor concerns about this.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and rising and pupils arrive at school in good time.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the action they took immediately following the previous inspection was not effective in addressing all the identified weaknesses and the pace of improvement has been too slow.
- Leaders have introduced a new approach to mathematics teaching which addresses the need to give pupils enough opportunities to practise what they have learned. However, leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good or that the new approach fully engages pupils' interest and enables them to master the skills they are learning. As a result, pupils' achievement in mathematics, as well as in English, is not yet good.
- School improvement plans do not always specify the dates by which planned actions are to be completed and do not set precise enough targets for the improvement of pupils' achievement, by which their success could be measured.
- The headteacher, as well as senior and middle leaders, several of whom have been appointed quite recently to their current posts, are passionate about improving the quality of teaching. They have succeeded in eliminating inadequate teaching and are relentlessly committed to ensuring that more of it is outstanding. Leaders have also ensured that pupils' behaviour and safety remain good.
- These factors are reliable indicators of the school's capacity for improvement.
- The headteacher, well supported by other leaders, manages the staff's performance well. She ensures that teachers have regular opportunities to learn about and to share examples of successful practice. She also makes sure that pay increases are closely linked to hitting school targets, including for pupils' achievement.
- The school has increased the frequency and improved the accuracy of its assessment of pupils' attainment, enabling leaders to provide pupils more quickly with extra support when they are in danger of falling behind. Leaders have carefully assessed the impact of the additional pupil premium money on individual pupils' progress. As a result, they have been able to make increasingly effective use of this funding to raise the standards reached by eligible pupils.
- The school is also making good use of the new additional sport funding to increase pupils' participation in physical activities and increase their understanding of the importance of regular exercise to developing healthy lifestyles.
- The curriculum, which includes a range of visits, visitors and out-of-school activities, makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This is also true of assemblies, where the celebration of pupils' achievement and contribution to the community, and of the school's particular ethos, is strongly emphasised.
- Leaders work well with parents, for example in deciding on the appropriate amount of homework to give pupils. The overwhelming majority of parents say that they would recommend the school to others.
- The local authority is providing effective support for the school, including training for new leaders and governors.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have improved their ability to assess the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. They played an important role in securing appointments which have strengthened the capacity of the school to bring about improvement and have helped it to successfully address weaknesses highlighted by the previous inspection. They know that pupils' achievement is not high enough and that the school's performance does not yet compare favourably with that of other schools. They also know, however, that it is beginning to improve and that this is because of the effective action taken by senior leaders to raise the quality of teaching and the headteacher's use of performance management. Governors understand and fully support the linking of pay rises to improving pupils' achievement. They keep a watchful eye on the school's finances, know how the extra pupil premium and sport funding is being spent and the difference it is making, and ensure that all requirements with regard to safeguarding pupils are met.

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	126043
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	428913

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Leachman
Headteacher	Helen Fletcher-Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 March 2012
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