

Potters Gate Church of England Primary School

Potters Gate, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7BB

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2014

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Pupils, including the most able, do not always achieve well enough in writing and mathematics and they have too few opportunities to develop these skills to support their learning across the curriculum.
- The attainment of pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium funding remains below that of other pupils at the school.
- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because their attitudes to learning are not always positive to ensure that they make rapid progress, especially when working by themselves.
- Teachers do not consistently challenge the pupils by giving them hard enough work or check that they are making enough progress during a lesson.
- Advice in teachers' marking on how pupils can improve their work is not always clear enough so that pupils know how to improve their work quickly.
- Pupils do not consistently check their work for any mistakes before or after it is marked and then make corrections when needed.
- Middle leaders are not all rigorous in checking that teaching and learning are consistently good enough in the areas and subjects they manage.

The school has the following strengths

- Children learn quickly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress from their starting points because they receive well-targeted help from members of staff.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, they are happy, feel safe and know how to stay safe.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development supports pupils well in learning good manners and in how to respect various beliefs and cultures.
- Senior leaders and governors know what to do to improve teaching and achievement and, consequently, the school is improving steadily.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching in 20 lessons, most jointly with the interim headteacher or one of the deputy headteachers.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account 77 responses to the online Parent View survey. Informal discussions were held with a random sample of parents.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in survey responses from 13 members of staff.
- A range of information supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents, checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance and safeguarding procedures.
- The children's centre on the same site as the school did not form part of this inspection.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gillian Coffey

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school that has grown in size since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for specific groups of pupils including those known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority) is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at school action is well below average and the proportions at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been many changes in governors and teachers, including senior and middle leaders, since the last inspection, including cover for a number of long-term absences. The interim headteacher had been in post for three weeks when the inspection took place.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching in Years 1 to 6, by:
 - making sure that teachers use information on how well pupils are doing to help them give pupils, including the most able, hard enough work
 - ensuring teachers check up more often on how well pupils are doing during lessons and adapt the lesson accordingly when necessary
 - ensuring teachers provide clearer guidance in their marking on how pupils can improve their work
 - making sure that pupils check their work for mistakes, both before and after it is marked, and they have the opportunity follow any advice given
 - ensuring that pupils are always clear about the purpose of their work so that they are motivated to try hard and have good attitudes towards learning.
- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics, including for the most able, by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and skills in writing and mathematics when working across the curriculum.
- Develop leadership and management, by:
 - increasing the impact of middle leaders so that they make better checks on teaching and learning so that these aspects of the school's work become consistently good or better.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The progress of pupils between Years 1 and 6 requires improvement because it is inconsistent between subjects and year groups. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average; although, in most years, it is higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. In writing and mathematics, pupils have too few opportunities to consolidate and extend their knowledge and skills in support of their learning across the curriculum. In addition, pupils do not check for and correct the frequent errors in their work, including in spelling, punctuation and in the way they set out mathematical problems.
- The majority of children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage working within the levels expected for their age. They make good progress because work is at just the right level for them to learn quickly and routines are well established. Children do especially well in writing and mathematics because these skills are promoted well. Occasionally, children make slower progress when they stop listening and contributing, for example during whole-class discussions.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. Their progress is monitored closely and teachers and classroom assistants provide skilful support in class and in additional specific teaching sessions.
- Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding make similar progress to others at the school, but this is insufficient to close the attainment gap between them and their peers. In 2013, eligible pupils were a year behind others at the school in mathematics and reading and half a year behind in writing. Leaders are in the process of reviewing provision for these pupils to identify how to make it effective.
- The most able pupils do not always learn quickly enough because, at times, their work is not demanding enough to challenge them to think and work hard.
- Pupils reach the physical performance levels of which they are capable because they enjoy taking part in the popular clubs and in lessons. For example, in Year 3, pupils worked well in small groups to put together a dance sequence.
- Pupils are positive about coming to school, but their attitudes towards learning are not always strong enough to ensure that they try their best in most lessons, particularly when they are unclear about the purpose of their written work.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers between Years 1 to 6 do not ensure that the work they set is always hard enough so that pupils, including the most able, consistently learn fast enough. Teachers have a wealth of information about how well pupils are doing in a subject but do not draw on this enough when planning their work. In addition, teachers miss opportunities to check up on learning during a lesson so that they can make adjustments to tasks when it is clear that pupils should be challenged more.
- Teachers have recently started to improve the guidance they give pupils on how to improve their work; although this is not a consistent practice and pupils are not always given the opportunity to follow up advice soon enough.
- Members of staff form strong relationships with the pupils enabling pupils to feel safe and happy at school. Teachers make attractive displays of pupils' best work, showing that it is appreciated and respected.
- A variety of resources are used well to engage pupils' interest in subjects, and to stimulate discussions with talk partners. For example, in Year 5, pupils enjoyed their mobile phone conversation with a conservationist to stimulate discussion about how to develop a habitat for a specific bird. Pupils are less enthusiastic when it comes to their written work and teachers do not always make its purpose clear enough so that pupils will want to try hard.
- Classroom assistants are used well to support small groups. For example, they often support

disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, making sure that there are practical resources available to help these pupils to understand better what they are learning.

- Teaching is good in the Reception classes where there is a good variety of work that children have chosen for themselves and tasks directed by an adult. This enables children to try hard throughout lessons and to learn rapidly. For example, in one lesson, children enjoyed experimenting with various objects before writing about what they had learned about the difference between pushing and pulling.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils' attitudes towards learning in Years 1 to 6 are not always positive enough to support rapid learning. This is especially the case when pupils have been asked to complete a piece of written work by themselves, without the direct support of an adult. When this happens their learning slows because they do not work quickly or check and correct avoidable mistakes before it is marked.
- Children behave well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are keen to learn and try hard in a variety of tasks.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils behave well at play times and around the school and are polite and friendly. Pupils are well cared for socially and equal opportunities are promoted and discrimination of any kind is discouraged.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and they know how to stay safe, including when using the internet. The vast majority of parents agree that their children feel safe at school. Pupils say that bullying of any kind is rare and is dealt with by members of staff to their satisfaction.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Parents are right to express concerns over the lack of continuity in leadership since the last inspection. The expansion of the school and long-term absences have resulted in many staff changes, and the rate of school development has been impeded.
- However, the school's capacity to improve is clearly demonstrated in the steady rise in pupils' achievement over the past two years, although teaching and progress are not yet consistently good across the school.
- Senior leaders are largely responsible for checking up on how well teaching and learning are improving, but are starting to expand the role of middle leaders in making more rigorous checks for themselves so that they can have a greater impact in the areas and subjects they manage.
- Senior leaders are ambitious for the school and fully appreciate what needs to be done to make it better. Self-evaluation is accurate because procedures for checking up on teaching and learning have recently become more rigorous and teachers are being held to account for how well their pupils are doing. Members of staff are keen to improve and are fully supportive of the leaders at the school.
- The local authority has increased the level of support provided to the school appropriately with its changing needs.
- The pupil premium funding is largely spent on additional support for individuals and small groups and while some of these activities have been successful, the attainment gap between eligible pupils and their peers is not closing.
- The school plans to spend the new funding to enhance sport on staff training. Clubs and lessons already contribute well towards pupils' healthy lifestyles and physical well-being. Pupils take part in a range of activities and competitions with other schools in the local area.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Members of staff are trained in caring for the pupils and are checked for their suitability for working in school.
- The curriculum includes all subjects, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their skills in writing and mathematics in different subjects.

■ Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. There are good opportunities for pupils to appreciate and respect cultural differences. For example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children were delighted to explain the various activities available to help them celebrate the Chinese New Year. A clear set of values, such as trust and truthfulness, are promoted well and pupils are comfortable about discussing feelings and beliefs with others.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- There have been many changes in governance over the last two years. New governors have been trained and are keen to become more involved in checking up on how well the school is doing. The governing body has recently undergone an external review of its work and is poised to increase the level of challenge it provides.
- Governors are well informed about what teaching is like and how leaders check up on how well teachers are doing. They know how good teaching is to be rewarded and weaker teaching supported.
- They are aware of how achievement at the school compares with other schools and what needs to be done to make it better and that the provision for pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is not having sufficient impact.

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	125161
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	432020

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	James Ford
Headteacher	Vanessa Bingham (interim headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 June 2011
Telephone number	01252 715619
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