

Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School (VA)

Singleton Drive, Grange Farm, Milton Keynes, MK8 0PZ

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| 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 | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards in mathematics, writing and particularly reading have improved since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and make learning interesting and enjoyable.
- Pupils from different groups make good progress because the school makes sure that work is matched to their individual learning needs.
- The headteacher and the other school leaders have worked hard to bring about improvements in teaching and, as a result, standards are rising.
- The school provides an excellent curriculum and offers a wide range of activities to enrich pupils' learning, including many opportunities in music and sports.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe, quickly take responsibility for managing their own behaviour, show great consideration and care for each other and are polite and well mannered.
- The high emphasis that the school places on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in their clear understanding of right and wrong and their deep interest in the world around them.
- Governors have very high expectations and have been a driving force in bringing about improvements. They have an impressive knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development and ask searching and challenging questions of school leaders.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school and appreciate the improvements that have been brought about. They know their children are safe, happy and well cared for.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding because the standards reached by the most able pupils, particularly in writing, are not always high enough.
- Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to undertake extended pieces of writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons across the school. Four of these were observed with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books, heard two groups of pupils read and met with representatives of the school council.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of the governing body meetings, assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding and child protection, the performance management of teachers and the school improvement and self-evaluation plans. They also looked at a recent external review carried out by the local authority.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior staff, three governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 90 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 27 questionnaires completed by staff. They also spoke to several parents informally at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Adam Hewett, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Ian McAllister | Additional Inspector |
| Ros Ferrara | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with the majority of these being of Black African heritage. A quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language and this is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A before- and after-school club operates every day.
- The school meets the government's floor targets which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching so that all pupils, especially the most able, make rapid and sustained progress by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces of work
 - ensuring all teachers set work that is sufficiently challenging, particularly in writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter school with skills that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. This is due to a good balance of teacher- and child-led activities and access to a stimulating learning environment, both indoors and outdoors. Children develop positive attitudes towards learning and good levels of independence and perseverance.
- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is broadly average in their reading, writing and mathematics. Data show that pupils' achievement is improving year on year and that pupils in Key Stage 1 make good progress.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Years 3 to 6. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was broadly in line with national averages. Evidence gathered during the inspection and the school's own data show that pupils are now making progress that is better than that found nationally.
- Although the most able pupils achieve well overall, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has been below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Sometimes the most able pupils do not achieve as well as they could because the work that is set in some lessons is not sufficiently challenging, particularly in writing. In the current Year 6 a greater number of the most able pupils are on track to achieve the higher levels of attainment.
- Pupils make very good progress in reading. In the 2013 phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) screening check, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standards was well above that found nationally. Younger pupils in Key Stage 1 use their increasingly secure knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make to read unfamiliar words. Very effective one-to-one teaching of reading helps any pupils who are struggling with reading to quickly learn the skills required and to make rapid progress.
- Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their peers and all achieve well. The school offers good-quality language support to pupils at the early stages of learning English, making sure that they are able to take an active part in their learning. This shows the success of the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are identified early and they are provided with one-to-one or small-group teaching to help them catch up. Their progress is checked closely and further support provided if necessary.
- When compared with other groups in the school, the achievement gap with their peers is closing in English and mathematics for pupils supported by the pupil premium. In Year 6 in 2013, the attainment of eligible pupils was about half a term behind their classmates in mathematics, two terms behind in reading and three terms behind in writing. Data for pupils currently in school show that their progress is in line with other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics and is good.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. In the lessons where learning is good, teachers use excellent subject knowledge to plan work that is challenging and engaging for all pupils. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson a group of the most able pupils used algebraic methods to discover the angles of different shapes and were confident in explaining their methods using advanced mathematical language.
- The learning environment across the school is lively and stimulating, with very good use made of displays and resources to motivate and help pupils in their learning. Pupils' work displayed around the school reflects their interest and knowledge of the world and the values that the school teaches them.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Teachers' planning and inspectors' observation of

lessons show that work is generally well matched to the different abilities of the pupils, particularly in mathematics. However, in some lessons, particularly in writing, the level of challenge for the most able pupils is not sufficiently high to ensure they make consistently good progress and can attain the highest standards.

- Some teaching of writing does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to write extended pieces of work and the outcomes are less good when pupils are not given enough opportunities to make some of their own decisions about what they write.
- Pupils display extremely positive attitudes towards learning. They respond well to the questions that teachers ask and apply themselves to the activities that are set. Teachers often ask well-constructed questions of pupils that match the different ability levels and that require them to think deeply before answering.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' progress are thorough and the information gathered is used well to plan the next steps in learning. Marking is generally used well to inform pupils about how they are progressing and to indicate how they can improve their work.
- Very good use is made of teaching assistants to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Staff accurately match work to the needs of these pupils and break learning down into small manageable steps so that the pupils can make good progress.
- Teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils make through regular performance meetings with the senior leaders. Targets are set for pupils' progress and these are monitored to see whether they are being met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The school has worked extremely hard and successfully to improve behaviour over the past three years and this is reflected in the consistently high standards of behaviour that pupils display. Behaviour management by all staff is consistent and effective and results in a calm, hard-working atmosphere in lessons throughout the school.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and show pride in their school. They were keen to talk to the inspectors and recognised that they are learning in an attractive, exciting and well-resourced environment. They appreciate all the opportunities that are available to them and all showed extremely positive attitudes towards learning.
- Pupils are confident that there is very little bullying and that if it does occur that it will be dealt with very swiftly and effectively by all the staff. They have a very good knowledge about different types of bullying. The curriculum is very well planned to support an understanding and tolerance of diverse kinds of people and this is reflected in the way that pupils interact with others of different faiths and beliefs.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school is a harmonious and friendly place that values all members of the community and where pupils feel safe and secure. Local police officers work within school to provide pupils with information about using the internet safely. Pupils are able to identify risks and to decide how manage them.
- The school ensures that pupils attend school regularly and takes swift action where attendance drops. The well-run, before-school club helps pupils to arrive on time and make a positive start to the day for those who attend.
- Parents have an extremely positive view of the school and recognise that it has improved significantly over the past three years. They are confident that it keeps their children safe and happy.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership of the headteacher has been a strong driving force in bringing about improvements in all areas of the school since the last inspection. He has helped to develop a collaborative and highly effective leadership team who monitors and evaluates provision and identifies what needs to be done to raise achievement further. There are well thought out and

thorough plans for improvement that identify the correct priorities and accurately review progress.

- Middle leaders monitor and evaluate how effectively their subjects and areas are being taught. Information from observations of teaching is used very well by school leaders to identify, share and develop good practice amongst staff.
- Senior leaders are extremely thorough in analysing how well pupils are learning in all subjects and also use this information to identify areas for improvement. Staff use assessment data well to inform their teaching, which enables most pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers' performance is managed very well. There are secure links between performance and pay awards. All staff say that they are proud to work at the school and feel well supported.
- The school provides pupils with a range of highly stimulating activities, both within and beyond the classroom. The curriculum is vibrant and exciting and makes good use of visits and visitors. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities, with a very strong focus on music. All pupils are taught to play the guitar and the recorder and there is a flourishing school orchestra.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The impact of the school's efforts can be seen in all areas of school life. The school is actively involved in collaborative projects with pupils in other countries. Pupils are provided with excellent opportunities for reflection. There is a very strong focus on understanding and appreciating different cultures and beliefs.
- The school is making good use of the additional sports funding by improving the quality of physical education teaching across the school through staff training and increasing opportunities for pupils' participation in a wider range of activities and games.
- The school places a very strong emphasis on safeguarding all pupils and ensures that all statutory requirements are met.
- The local authority has provided suitable support and challenge to the school over recent years. It has recognised the improvements that have taken place and has now reduced the level of support provided.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is highly effective in its work. All governors are actively involved in systematically evaluating the school's performance. They meet regularly with school leaders and ask searching questions of them. They have a clear and shared vision of what needs to be achieved. All governors are linked to individual classes and have first-hand knowledge of the quality of teaching. They ensure that the resources available to the school, including the pupil premium, are used to best effect to increase progress for all pupils. They ensure that teachers are suitably rewarded for their performance and the quality of their teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement. The quality of the governors' work has been recognised by the local authority who uses their model of governance as an example of good practice with other schools.

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 | 134164 |
| Local authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 431035 |

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 aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 450 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Beverley Delaney |
| Headteacher | Huw Humphreys |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25–26 April 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01908 867356 |
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