

Checkendon Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Checkendon, Reading, RG8 0SR

Inspection dates 4–5 March 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		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

- Over time pupils have not all made the progress they should have done, especially in learning phonics (the sounds that letters make) by Year 1 and in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- No pupils reached the higher levels in writing by the end of Year 2 in 2013.
- Pupils sometimes do not have enough opportunities to write in subjects other than English.
- There have been inconsistencies in teaching over time, partly because several classes have lacked a permanent teacher.
- At times, some of the most-able pupils are not given difficult enough work to do and this slows their progress.
- Marking in mathematics is not so well developed as in English and does not consistently show pupils how to improve their work.
- Many changes in staff, including class teachers and at a senior level, mean that the school has not improved as rapidly as it should have done since the previous inspection.
- The school has not received the level of support it might reasonably have expected from the local authority in the past year.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start and achieve well in the Reception class.
- In 2013 standards were above average in reading and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school.
- The new acting headteacher has a clear understanding of how to improve the school and is well supported by the knowledgeable governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, almost all jointly with the acting headteacher.
- The inspector heard pupils read and, with the acting headteacher, looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, evidence of the school's partnership work and information for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils chosen at random. Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers and other staff, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke informally to parents bringing their children to school.
- The inspector considered the 10 staff questionnaires that were completed.

Inspection team

Nick Butt, Lead Inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There is a Reception class and three other mixed-age classes. Pupils come from Checkendon and neighbouring villages.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which in this school provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is average.
- The acting headteacher was the assistant headteacher at the school and took on the role of acting headteacher in January 2014. There have been many changes to staffing in recent years. A new Chair of the Governing Body took up position in September 2013.
- Until January 2014 the school shared an executive headteacher with another local primary school. This arrangement has now ceased following her resignation.
- In 2013 the school did not meet current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good by:
 - making sure all the most-able pupils have difficult enough work to do so that they make good progress
 - bringing the quality of marking in mathematics up to the same good standard as in writing, so that pupils are clear about how to improve their work.
- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics by making sure that:
 - pupils have more opportunities to write across a range of different subjects to practise their skills
 - any remaining gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics are filled so that all pupils make at least expected progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by securing stability in staffing, particularly through appointing a permanent headteacher and a class teacher in Years 3 and 4.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because some pupils have not made the progress they could have done, especially in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In 2013 the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check was well below average, and a significant fall on the 2012 performance. This was because these pupils missed out on consistently good phonics teaching due to several changes of staff.
- Since then the school has revised the teaching of phonics and has made sure that reading is now taught well and that pupils have a good understanding of how to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Children join the Reception class with skills that are typical for their age, with strengths in some areas such as recognising numbers. They make good progress in Reception because the activities interest them and develop their early reading, writing and mathematics skills well.
- Pupils make good progress in the current Years 1 and 2 class because there are high expectations of what they can achieve. In 2013 standards were above average in reading and mathematics, but not so strong in writing. No pupils reached the higher Level 3 in writing.
- The school has focused on improving the writing of its most-able pupils by changing how writing is assessed so that pupils are clear about what they need to do next to improve. Pupils now have more opportunities to write at length in English lessons, but not to an appropriate extent in some other subjects such as science.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 has been uneven. While some pupils have achieved well, others have not. This is mainly due to inconsistencies in teaching over time, including when classes have not had a permanent teacher.
- In 2013 standards were below average in mathematics and reading, and average in writing. Too few pupils made the expected two National Curriculum levels of progress in mathematics. The school has tackled this by making sure that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are identified promptly and targeted support is given to close them. This is beginning to have a positive impact, especially in the current Years 5 and 6, where pupils' attainment in mathematics is above expectations. However, there is more still to be done in some other year groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make inconsistent progress. While most make good progress in at least one subject, they also do not make good progress in another subject and the subjects vary according to the individual pupils. While the school can point to particular pupils who have done very well as a result of the good support they have received, this is not consistently the case.
- There were no Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium in 2013. The small number of eligible pupils across the school makes similarly uneven progress to other pupils. The impact of the support they receive is not consistently good.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been consistently good over time and this has led to variations in pupils' achievement. Changes in teaching staff have meant some cohorts of pupils have had several different teachers and interruptions to their learning.
- The situation is now much more stable. The acting headteacher has focused on improving teaching and given clear direction to staff. This has resulted in most pupils making faster progress and a greater proportion of good elements to teaching.
- At times, some of the most-able pupils are not given difficult enough work to do, and this slows their progress. For example, pupils' books showed that the most-able pupils in one class had been given worksheets to complete which were too easy for them.
- The energetic and enthusiastic staff make learning enjoyable for pupils and use resources well to engage them. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were very interested in a video clip that

showed how plants grow over time, before going outside to explore the flora in the school grounds.

- Phonics is now taught well so that pupils are confident when reading new words. Older pupils are very positive about reading and keep their own journals which provide a stimulating record of their reactions to what they have read.
- Children in Reception are taught well and thrive in an exciting class base, with interesting activities to undertake both inside and outside. For example, having learnt about subtraction and 'making one less', pupils went outside and played skittles, recording how many had been knocked over as a subtraction number sentence.
- Books show that the quality of pupils' work is improving. Pupils take a pride in their work and cover a good range of material in English and mathematics. In some classes, pupils do not have so much chance to write in subjects other than English.
- Marking often shows pupils how to improve their work, especially in English. This is not so well developed in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well and work closely with teachers to tailor work to pupils' particular needs. This has had a positive impact, especially in the teaching of phonics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in class and around the school. They are caring and polite. Pupils like being part of a smaller school. They said, 'You get to know people really well.'
- Older pupils support the youngest ones as buddies, a relationship that extends to two years because they are paired up in Year 5 with the new Reception children. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. The school's 'sports leaders' have been trained well to plan and run games for groups of younger pupils at lunchtimes.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to take part in lessons and work hard in class.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. They know about different types of bullying such as cyber bullying, but say it is practically non-existent in their school. They are very confident that any concerns they may have will be dealt with by staff promptly. Parents are happy that their children are safe.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, occasionally pupils are not fully focused on their work, particularly if it is not hard enough.
- Attendance is above average and this reflects pupils' enjoyment.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school is emerging from a period of uncertainty. There have been several changes of staff and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and the appointment of the acting headteacher. Leadership and management require improvement because there has been too much variation in pupils' performance over time and teaching has not enabled pupils to make consistently good progress.
- The new acting headteacher has been quick to identify what the school needs to do to improve and has won the support of parents, staff and governors in driving improvement. Staff are very willing to try new approaches to teaching and learning and are united in their ambition to see the school improve rapidly.
- The acting headteacher has developed other leaders well and they are having a positive impact on their areas of responsibility. For example, progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good.
- The acting headteacher conducts rigorous checks on the quality of teaching and gives staff clear guidance on how to improve their practice. This is tied in with the management of teachers'

performance. Pay awards are not given unless there is evidence that pupils' progress has improved.

- Since the acting headteacher's appointment, she has made sure careful note is taken of each pupil's progress and that staff are held accountable for how well classes perform. The school is fully committed to include all pupils and to promoting equal opportunities, as well as making sure that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The curriculum is interesting and relevant to pupils. They have undertaken interesting projects, such as writing a compendium of stories set in Tudor times. Pupils also won a national competition for Checkendon to celebrate the author Michael Morpurgo's 70th birthday, during which he will visit the school and present it with a set of his novels.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Links with a school in Pakistan have been productive, including a live video link between pupils from both schools.
- The school spends its primary school sport funding wisely in introducing new sports to pupils such as netball and tag rugby, and arranging coaching for staff. This has given staff a greater confidence in teaching sport and increased participation among pupils, resulting in gains to their health and well-being.
- Parents are very supportive of the school, and all say they would recommend it to other parents. Some parents send their children to the school from far afield because they value its caring atmosphere and the dedication of its staff.
- While the local authority has offered some support to the school, this is less than it could reasonably have been expected to receive in view of the many changes in staffing and its leadership, and the inconsistencies in its performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a wide range of expertise to the school. From their regular visits, which focus on the school's priorities for improvement, they gain a good knowledge of the school's performance and the quality of teaching. They understand how teachers' performance is managed, and what the school is doing to link pay to pupils' progress. They know how well pupils are doing in comparison with pupils in other schools nationally. They also know how the pupil premium is being spent and the impact it is having. Governors have become more closely involved in setting goals for the school. Though previously slow to grasp the impact of staffing difficulties on pupils' learning, they ask searching questions of senior leaders and hold the school to account. They are now aware of the need to secure stability in leadership and to recruit permanent teachers for each class. Governors make sure that all requirements are met to keep pupils safe.

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	123200
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	439727

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	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Hayes
Headteacher	Gillian Seymour (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 May 2011
Telephone number	01491 680693
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