

# Long Marston VA Church of England Primary School

Station Road, Long Marston, Tring, HP23 4QS

**Inspection dates** 1–2 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- Pupils achieve well. Their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above the national average.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been rising over the past two years. In 2013, standards in reading and writing were above the national average.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most teaching is carefully planned to match pupils' abilities and help them to make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are taught how to sound out letters and words effectively.
- Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning contribute considerably to their achievement. They work well with each other and demonstrate strong respect for adults and their classmates.
- Leaders, ably assisted by the staff, have been successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement throughout the school.
- Governors are well informed and play an effective role in supporting school development. They hold leaders to account for pupils' achievement and the school's performance.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in other subjects. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to improve their problem-solving skills.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about what pupils already know and can do to set challenging enough work, particularly for the more-able pupils.
- Marking does not always give pupils clear guidance about how to improve their work in mathematics.
- Pupils do not always get the opportunity to respond to teachers' suggestions or marking to improve their work.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in eight lessons, of which two were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of other short visits to lessons and learning areas. The inspector also listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 54 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and 19 responses to a staff questionnaire. The inspector also spoke with parents during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is well below the national average and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed services, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been some changes in staffing, including to the senior leadership team, over the past two years. The current headteacher and the deputy headteacher took up their posts in April and September 2012 respectively.
- The school is a member of the local schools' consortium, which includes several local primary schools and the local secondary school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and raise achievement further by:
  - ensuring that tasks set in lessons build on what teachers' assessments tell them their pupils already know and understand, and stretch all groups of pupils, especially the more-able pupils
  - giving pupils opportunities to respond to the guidance teachers provide when marking their work.
- Speed up pupils' progress in mathematics across the school by:
  - giving pupils in all classes sufficient opportunities to develop skills for solving problems in mathematics
  - making sure that marking consistently provides pupils with clear advice about how to make their work better.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. The school's well-planned programme of learning and teachers' careful monitoring ensure children make good progress in the Reception year and join Year 1 with levels of development that are above the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in mathematics has not been as strong as in other subjects, however, especially for the more-able pupils. This is because pupils' problem-solving skills are not sufficiently developed. The school identified this as an area for further development and has reviewed the teaching programmes for mathematics to ensure that pupils are able to build on their prior learning consistently.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has improved steadily over the past two years. The national test results for 2013 show a significant improvement in achievement in reading and writing. The school's data on current pupils' progress, supported by the work seen in their books, suggest that most pupils are making rapid progress in all areas and that attainment is likely to rise further. More-able pupils also make good progress, though sometimes they could make even faster progress if their work was more challenging.
- Standards in reading are good throughout the school. Younger pupils apply their knowledge of phonics (linking letters and sounds) to read a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books. Older pupils develop a good understanding of different styles of writing and write well for different purposes. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check were above average in 2013.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make consistently good progress from their starting points because the school provides well-targeted support for them. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make equally good progress as their classmates.
- Throughout the school, pupils who are supported with pupil premium funding make good progress, attaining as well as the others in reading, writing and mathematics. The additional funding has been spent on staff who give carefully planned support for individuals to ensure that they do not fall behind in their learning. The very small number of pupils in Year 6 in 2013 means that their attainment cannot be reported without the risk of identification. However, the school's data indicates that pupils supported through the pupil premium make the same or faster progress compared with other pupils and the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates is narrowing.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Staff create a purposeful learning environment. There are good relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and pupils. Adults treat pupils with respect and are interested in what they have to say. As a result, pupils are actively engaged in lessons and know that teachers are keen to hear their views and ideas. They want to do well and respond readily to tasks with interest and enthusiasm.
- Children in the Reception year thrive in a stimulating learning environment and pursue activities of their own choice as well as those directed by adults. They work cooperatively, engaging well in reading and developing language skills. This was seen in a phonics session where children used their knowledge of letters and sounds to spell words and read stories.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding, challenge them to think more deeply about issues and to build on what they already know. For example in a Years 4 and 5 lesson, pupils were very well engaged in planning to interview witnesses so they could write a newspaper report on the devastation caused by a tornado. This meant that they had to think hard about the key points for report writing and build on their learning in the previous lesson about how to gather evidence from witnesses.
- The teaching of reading is good. Group reading sessions are used effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of different styles of texts or to analyse events and characters.
- Work is usually pitched at just the right level for all groups of pupils. Joint planning between teachers and the skilful teaching assistants enables the latter to offer good support for the targeted pupils. However, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively enough to ensure that all groups, particularly the more-able pupils, are stretched to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in literacy regularly and effectively, providing clear guidance about how well pupils are doing and how they can move forward to the next stage in their learning. However, this is not so in mathematics, where too little guidance is given on how pupils can improve their work. Often, pupils are not given the opportunity to respond to teachers' guidance and correct their work. As a result, they repeat their mistakes.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and want to do well. Within lessons they show a growing love for reading and show enjoyment at joining in all the learning activities. This contributes greatly to their good achievement.
- There are good procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour. These are applied consistently and pupils respond well to them. As a result, they are growing up as confident learners. They enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their attendance which is above the national average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school and all parents who responded to the questionnaire agree. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. This is because the school includes issues about safety in its teaching and its consistent work with parents. Pupils are well aware of various types of safety issues such as internet safety, fire and road safety and they understand the dangers of illegal drugs.
- Pupils know different forms that bullying can take, including name-calling, racism and cyber bullying. They say that bullying rarely happens in school and are confident that adults will deal with any rare incidents of bullying fairly and effectively, should they occur. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire said that behaviour was good.
- Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility which is reflected in their commitment to the work of the school council and their roles as play leaders and 'buddies' for younger pupils. They raise funds for national and international charities. Recently, they chose and raised funds for Sports Relief.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, supported by other leaders and staff, has successfully driven up improvement in teaching and achievement since taking up her post. Together, they have established a harmonious and welcoming environment where pupils grow up as mature learners. The school has an accurate view of its successes and of where further improvements need to be made.
- The performance of staff is well managed and is clearly related to pupils' achievement. The quality of teaching is monitored effectively and set against challenging individual annual performance targets for staff. These are linked to teachers' professional development. Staff are keen to improve their practice and this is contributing to rising standards. Subject leaders carry out their roles conscientiously and effectively. They continually reflect on the quality of their work and use these insights to develop their roles further.
- The school provides a broad range of subjects that meets the interest of pupils. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. As a result pupils strive to achieve well. A range of clubs, music tuition and visits to museums and art galleries make pupils' learning meaningful. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school is using the primary sport funding to support a range of initiatives that are designed to increase pupils' involvement. These include working with a sports specialist from the local secondary school to improve pupils' and teachers' skills in physical education lessons. Pupils enjoy a wide range of after-school sporting activities and their participation rate is high.
- The local authority supports the school well, particularly by working with the senior leaders to check on the progress and impact of the school's work. Partnership with local schools also helps the school to share and develop good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has a good knowledge of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance through their own monitoring visits and reports from the headteacher and the local authority adviser. They understand data about pupils' achievement and know how the school's results compare with other schools nationally. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's performance management system and holds the headteacher to account for ensuring that teachers only receive salary increases if their performance is at least good. Governors ensure that the resources available through pupil premium and primary sport funding are spent effectively to support pupils' achievement and that the school budget is efficiently managed. The governing body ensures that the procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet statutory requirements.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117459
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	439580

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	126
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Banister
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clare South
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 March 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01296 668386
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