

Garstang St Thomas' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Kepple Lane, Garstang, Nr Preston, Lancashire, PR3 1PB

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 from their starting points. Standards at Key Stage 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. An above-average proportion of pupils makes better than expected progress in reading and mathematics.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class and all make good progress, so that the majority achieve a good level of development by the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teaching is good and staff provide many high quality and exciting opportunities for pupils to learn well and make good progress in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Pupils are very eager to learn and have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils feel safe in school. The quality of care that staff give pupils is exemplary, especially those who have additional needs or whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable.
- The school is led by a headteacher and senior leaders who are ambitious for their pupils. Their focus on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching has been successful in driving up standards for all pupils.
- Governors are supportive, knowledgeable and have an accurate view of the school's performance. They have worked well with senior leaders to raise standards and further improve the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of feedback as pupils learn and marking in books does not always give pupils precise advice about how to improve their work.
- The school is not yet using its assessment information effectively to check closely the performance of all groups of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed twelve lessons or part-lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 27 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to two parents who requested meetings with the inspection team.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: assessment data, the school's evaluation of its work, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation, reports from school improvement partners, information about the management of teachers' performance, monitoring records and the school's improvement plan.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and also reviewed samples of their work.
- They reviewed 14 responses from staff to the inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed an assembly led by local clergy.
- They observed behaviour in lessons, around the school and on the playground.

Inspection team

Clare Daniel, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila O'Keeffe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- A below average proportion of pupils is supported through school action.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A well-above average proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school other than at the normal time. A large proportion of pupils joining the school have additional and often complex needs.
- The school operates a breakfast club during term time which is managed by the governing body.
- A private provider operates an after-school club on the school site during term time.
- The school site includes a Children's Centre which is overseen by the headteacher and governing body.
- The headteacher undertook an associate headteacher post in another primary school in the same local authority for four terms between September 2012 and December 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the feedback given to pupils as they learn and marking in their books are always of the highest quality, so that all pupils receive clear advice about how to improve their work.
- Refine the school's tracking and assessment systems so that senior leaders are able to analyse the performance of all groups more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A much higher than average proportion of pupils joins the school after the start of the Reception year and the majority of these pupils has a range of additional needs. All groups of pupils make good progress across the school but the overall standards achieved by different classes are sometimes variable because they are affected by the number of transient pupils.
- Approximately half of the children join the Reception class with skills that are below those typical for their age. All children make good progress, and some make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The majority of children leave the Reception class having achieved a good level of development.
- In the most recent Year 1 phonic screening check (a check on pupils' knowledge and understanding of letters and the sounds they make), a well-above average proportion of pupils reached the standard expected for their age. The majority of pupils in Year 2 who did not meet the standard in Year 1 were successfully assessed the following year because the school had provided them with extra support to help them meet the required standard.
- Pupils make expected progress in Key Stage 1 and reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are broadly average. Inward mobility has had a significant impact on the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 recently. A particularly high proportion of pupils who join the school have required extra support to make good progress from their starting points.
- Standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average and progress is good with almost every pupil making at least the expected amount of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The most able pupils make good progress and in 2013, almost half the Year 6 pupils made better than expected progress in reading and mathematics. An above-average proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in reading, mathematics and the English grammar, spelling and punctuation test.
- In 2013, girls attained higher standards than boys at Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has ensured that they have provided boys with significant additional support as well as redesigning the curriculum so that the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is now narrowing rapidly in most classes.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational is good. They make similar progress to that of their peers and reach levels of attainment in line with those of similar pupils nationally. The school is quick to assess pupils who may be underachieving and offers pupils a range of support in small groups or individually which ensures that they do not fall behind their peers.
- Although the school regularly assesses the progress of pupils with special educational needs alongside their peers, senior leaders do not yet analyse the progress of pupils receiving specific programmes of support over a shorter period of time and therefore are not always fully aware of how successful these programmes are in raising achievement.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress. In 2013 by the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment of eligible pupils was similar to that of their classmates in all areas except mathematics, where they lagged approximately two terms behind.
- The school's work to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve well promotes equality of opportunity successfully.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is effective and leads to purposeful learning. Teaching is especially effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage and children are enthusiastic about their work especially their writing. They are keen to share what they have learnt with each other, a range of adults and the

inspectors.

- Pupils work very well together in groups and pairs, as well as individually, and support each other's learning effectively through discussion. Pupils listen attentively to instructions and apply themselves to a range of activities quickly.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage adults lead learning very effectively because they have an accurate understanding of the standards achieved by each child and keep a clear focus on the next steps in learning so that children make at least good progress.
- Phonics is taught successfully. In a phonics session in the Early Years Foundation Stage an imaginative range of resources such as, sound boxes, painting, sand and magnetic letters ensured children used what they already knew to blend sounds in their writing with confidence and enjoyment.
- Work is prepared well and resources are readily available for pupils so that they have all the equipment required to tackle their tasks. Where pupils made good progress in areas that they had previously found challenging, the use of adults to support learning, as well as appropriate resources, had a significant impact on the standards achieved. This was particularly evident in mathematics in Year 5 when support was most effective in clarifying what was expected.
- Pupils benefit from the high number of adults working in each class. Groups of pupils are supported well, especially those who are new to the school or who have special educational needs or disabilities, so they make good progress, sometimes from a below-average starting point.
- Occasionally, checks on pupils' understanding as they learn are not precise enough. This means that tasks are not always adjusted promptly or support provided to correct errors and clarify misunderstandings.
- Pupils' books show that sometimes when marking work, teachers do not give clear enough instructions or guidance about how to improve work or help with correcting mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They have high expectations of their own and others' behaviour. Pupils are highly critical of poor behaviour and reported some very minor incidents as being of concern to them when talking to inspectors. This reflects the pupils' own high standards of behaviour and the way that they monitor and judge the behaviour of others in the school.
- Pupils can talk about the school's behaviour management strategies and understand the systems of sanctions and rewards that are consistently applied in all classes. They also expressed a sophisticated awareness of the challenges for the very few pupils who sometimes find it difficult to adhere to the school's expectations and appreciated how these pupils were managed fairly, consistently and with respect.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. In the vast majority of lessons observed, pupils demonstrated high levels of engagement with the activities planned for them and were well prepared to learn. Because of this they made rapid progress in their learning and achieved well.
- Pupils reported that they felt that they were cared for exceptionally well by school staff and that they were confident that all adults in school would help them with any concerns or worries they had promptly and effectively.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were extremely positive about the school and expressed their confidence in the school to promote good behaviour and care for pupils well. They said that 'nothing is too much trouble' and reported that their children had received 'an extra level' of support above and beyond what could reasonably be expected during their time there.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils are exceptionally well supported in developing strategies for keeping themselves safe in school and beyond, including on the Internet. They have an excellent awareness of the opportunities that the school provides them with through the curriculum and through the range of visitors invited into school to work with them.

- Most parents who responded to Parent View, the on-line questionnaire, said that their child feels safe at school, that their child is well cared for and that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved. The majority of parents felt that the school deals well with bullying.
- Attendance is consistently high, even for those pupils below statutory school age in the Reception classes. The school checks punctuality rigorously and both challenges and supports families who are not always on time for school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school with a vision of high standards, good progress and equality of opportunity for all pupils. Her knowledge of the pupils in her school and the level of pastoral care that she provides to both them and their families are exemplary. All staff are committed to the school's highly supportive, Christian ethos and all new arrivals to the school community are welcomed with love and encouragement.
- Senior and middle leaders all demonstrate the same high levels of commitment to raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. They have accurately identified areas where progress needs to improve and have put in place well-thought-out plans for improvement which are based on an accurate analysis of the school's current position.
- While the progress of pupils currently in the school is checked regularly, leaders are not yet assessing the progress of pupils who have been at the school the longest against the transient pupils as well as they could in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their achievement.
- Middle leaders are contributing well to improving the quality of teaching through regular checks in their areas of responsibility. The senior leader with responsibility for overseeing the achievement of and provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities has very recently been appointed and is not yet analysing the impact of short programmes of support for these pupils.
- Staff morale is very good and all adults in the school know the role they play and the effect they have on improving the quality of the education that pupils receive.
- All teachers have performance targets which are clearly linked to improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. The school's procedures for checking these targets throughout the year are good and leaders can clearly show the impact that support and professional development are having on improving the quality of teaching for individual staff.
- The curriculum is very well supported by a wide range of trips and visits. Pupils spoke very positively about how the many opportunities to link their learning with local events ensured that they felt as though they were contributing to the life of the community outside the school. Pupils in Key Stage 2 had produced some very high quality writing inspired by World War I and were making their final preparations to take part as 'Tommy's Tommys' in the Whit celebrations in the town.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well supported by the range of subjects taught and by assemblies as well as opportunities to take part in different extra-curricular activities. The standards achieved by pupils in music are particularly high as a result of very high quality teaching and learning opportunities.
- Clear plans are in place to spend the new sport funding to ensure that all pupils benefit from an improved quality of training for staff, as well as an increase in the range of activities provided by the school and enhanced extra-curricular clubs.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support for the school and has engaged the Reception class teacher as a 'Lead Practitioner' to support improvements across the county. The headteacher was also seconded by the local authority as an associate headteacher to another school for four terms during 2012-13 to provide effective leadership through a period of turbulence.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors challenge senior leaders about the speed of improvements in the standards pupils reach and how much pupils achieve, as well as the quality of teaching. They check the quality of the school's work regularly at their meetings, but they do not yet have a fully established programme of checks in school alongside senior staff. They have undertaken appropriate training on checking achievement and understand the link between the arrangements to manage the performance of teachers and their impact on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching, as well as pay rewards. Governors have a good overview of the spending and impact of pupil-premium funding and sport funding and are committed to ensuring that every pupil is given an equal opportunity to succeed. Governors meet all 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

Unique reference number	119528
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	439957

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	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doug Willoughby
Headteacher	Helen Ife
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
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