

St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School

High Street, Hartfield, TN7 4AA

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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' achievement is not good. Too few pupils achieve the average national standard in reading, writing and mathematics when they are aged seven or 11.
- Teaching is not consistently good, notably in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where activities are not always planned well enough. In other classes for younger pupils, teachers do not routinely make good use of information about pupils' progress when they plan lessons.
- Leaders' work to improve teaching has yet to ensure it is consistently good for all classes and in all subjects. Leaders do not make full use of information about pupils' progress to identify where teaching is effective and where it needs to improve.
- Teaching assistants do not consistently make enough difference to pupils' learning, nor do they always supervise behaviour in the playground closely enough.
- The way the school records behaviour incidents lacks attention to detail and leaders do not review this information fully to identify patterns in pupils' behaviour so they can be tackled swiftly.
- The school does not always plan effectively to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Communication with the parents and carers of these pupils is not timely on some occasions.
- Older pupils have too few opportunities to study all the subjects of the curriculum in enough depth.

The school has the following strengths:

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a dynamic team who model the aspiration and good practice they promote. Their work to improve teaching is gathering pace.
- Pupils' achievement is improving for the most able pupils by age seven, and more generally by age 11.
- Most pupils feel safe, behave well and are eager to learn.
- Pupils' punctuality has improved, reflecting parents' and carers' increasingly good support for this.
- Governors know the school well and fulfil their responsibilities with increasing effectiveness.
- Most parents and carers support the school, value its leaders and staff, and are keen to contribute to its continuing improvement.

Information about this inspection

- At the time of the inspection, most pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 were on an educational visit to France with their teachers. The inspector observed teaching in every other class with the headteacher. This included some lessons led by teaching assistants.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading and looked at pupils' work in their books and on display. Pupils' books from Year 5 and Year 6 were examined in greater detail.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), the Chair of the Governing Body with the vice chair and another governor, and a representative of the local authority. The inspector talked with parents and carers in the playground at the start of both inspection days, considered correspondence from a number of parents and carers, met individually with two parents or carers at their request, and took account of 47 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Responses to the staff questionnaire were also analysed. The inspector held a briefing for teachers and talked with staff around the school.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils, observed playtime and lunchtime, and talked with pupils around the school.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including teachers' plans for what pupils will learn, plans for the school's further improvement, and plans for the school's use of government sports funding and the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils receiving free school meals or in the care of the local authority. The inspector also checked arrangements for keeping pupils safe, pupils' attendance and behaviour records, minutes of governing body meetings, local authority reports and examples of governors' and school newsletters to parents and carers. Records of how pupils' learning is tracked and analysed were scrutinised, together with records of the quality of teaching, advice about special educational needs provided by external agencies, and parents' and carers' correspondence with the school.

Inspection team

Siân Thornton, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School is smaller than an average-sized primary school and includes mixed-age classes. Most pupils come from White British families. A very small number of pupils come from families with Asian or Black African heritage. All pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and who are supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is very low. This is extra funding provided by the government to support pupils who are known to be or have been eligible for free school meals and those cared for by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at age 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all pupils make good progress from their different starting points to meet or exceed nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at age seven and 11 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use accurate information about pupils' starting points and their current progress to plan for next steps in learning and that teachers whose classes have pupils of the same age plan together to make sure that they have the same experiences
 - ensuring that the school's expectations are met that marking consistently sets out pupils' next steps and that pupils always have the opportunity to respond to this guidance at specific times or in the work that follows on
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to extend their writing and mathematics and build on their learning within topics
 - raising expectations for the quality and quantity of written work pupils produce and providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length from their own ideas
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of the support provided by teaching assistants
 - ensuring that in the Early Years Foundation Stage all teaching, activities and adult interaction with pupils are purposeful, focused on learning and well organised.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders place greater emphasis on improving teaching, especially for the younger pupils
 - information about pupils' progress is used more effectively to check how good teaching is, to identify pupils who need more support or challenge and to report to parents and carers
 - incidents of poor behaviour are fully recorded, including the investigation of their causes and consequences, and that these records are routinely analysed to identify any patterns so the underlying reasons can be tackled
 - the identification, planning and recording of special educational needs work and support is always timely, detailed and of practical help to those working with the pupil at home and at school
 - the work of teaching assistants and supervisors is well organised and efficiently managed during lessons and around the school
 - in Years 3 to 6, pupils have opportunities to learn more in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils join the school with levels of learning which are expected for their age. However, with the exception of the most able pupils in Year 6 and Year 2, too few pupils, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, achieve well by age seven and age 11, and the school is not therefore promoting equality of opportunity.
- Children's learning in the Reception class requires improvement because the lack of purpose and organisation in some of the activities provided for them limits the progress they can make. This summer, more Reception class pupils than in previous years are ready for the opportunities and challenges of Year 1 and Year 2. However, this is largely due to their readiness to learn when they came into the school and their positive attitudes and behaviour.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils' current work and the school's records of pupils' learning show that progress is accelerating, especially for more-able pupils. Learning about letters and sounds and how these are used in reading and writing (phonics) has improved because teaching is more effective. Nevertheless, achievement still requires improvement so that more pupils achieve the expected level by the end of Year 2 and catch up on any weak past progress.
- Pupils' achievement by age 11 requires improvement, although is improving. After achieving less than they could have by the end of Year 2, more are catching up and making good progress by the end of Year 6. The most able pupils make the best progress from their starting points. In 2013 a greater proportion of the pupils in Year 6 at the school achieved the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics than did so nationally.
- The very small number of pupils supported by the pupil premium achieve similarly to other pupils. As with their peers, their progress is variable, and includes outstanding progress for some older pupils because of the better teaching they receive.
- Most pupils take a pride in their work, but some do not present their learning with enough care. In some classes, pupils are not given time to develop their stamina for longer pieces of work or to develop and show their learning outside a structure given by the teacher.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is of good or better quality to ensure pupils make good progress throughout the school. Teaching is improving and includes some strikingly good and outstanding examples. However, some teaching and some support from teaching assistants is not as good as it should be.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of their different pupils, and good progress is evident for all groups in the class. Pupils, including those who need to catch up because they have not had good teaching in the past, make good progress when they are set work based on what they know, understand and can do. This imaginative and inspiring teaching is more evident in Key Stage 2, where pupils have more regular opportunities to write at length or rehearse and consolidate their mathematics skills in different ways.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not plan carefully enough for pupils to make good progress from their different starting points. Where different classes include pupils of the same age, there is insufficient communication between teachers to ensure that learning is consistent between the classes, especially in mathematics. As a result, although pupils make progress, this is more limited, especially for those of average ability.
- In weaker lessons, and especially in Reception, teachers do not take close enough account of pupils' progress or plan in enough detail for learning in the different areas of the curriculum. As a result, teaching and activities are not well paced or stimulating and learning drifts.
- There are examples of teaching assistants providing sterling support for learning and behaviour. However, this support is inconsistent. Assistants are not always clear enough about the learning

that the teacher has planned, and they do not use questions well enough or demonstrate sufficient subject knowledge to take pupils' learning forward.

- Marking has improved this year, and teachers work hard to apply the school's policy. In the best examples, pupils receive regular feedback about the strengths and weaknesses in their work and how to improve. However, teachers do not always give pupils the expected next steps in their comments, and when they do, pupils are not always given opportunities to respond.
- Pupils' work in writing or mathematics is often recorded on a template provided by the teacher, but pupils are not always given enough opportunities afterwards to consolidate or develop their learning through further writing or mathematics. In writing, pupils regularly compose elements of stories, or other short pieces, but in some classes this rarely extends into opportunities to write at length from their own ideas, and this restricts their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The school's records of behaviour incidents lack the necessary detail about events leading to the incident or the investigation that has been carried out. These records are not routinely checked to identify patterns or areas of concern so they can be tackled. This is why safety of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils feel safe in the school. They generally play safely together and alert adults to any accidents. Good levels of adult supervision are provided in the playground but staff do not always monitor carefully enough the pupils' use of the activities which have recently been provided.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils behave well around the school and in lessons, even when teaching is not stimulating or well paced. Older pupils enjoy their responsibilities as play leaders, and make a difference in the playground. Pupils appreciate the wide range of playground activities although these are sometimes pushed to the edge of the playground when football games dominate the available space.
- Pupils are alert to the possibilities of bullying, including on the internet. They recognise that this is wrong and that it should be reported immediately. None of the pupils spoken to by the inspector were aware of bullying in school. However, they were all sure that if a problem did occur, they could trust the adults in school to take action.
- Previous problems with some pupils' late arrivals have been overcome by the headteacher working effectively with parents and carers. In a few instances, unauthorised absences for holidays or occasional days stand out in the school's figures, which otherwise show that attendance is good.
- Risk assessments are completed effectively, including for the recently introduced 'walking bus'. Leaders and governors are alert to the premises risks that may occur.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are determined that the school should improve as rapidly as possible to be at least good in every area. They recognise that teaching and pupils' achievement are not yet good enough.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are taking effective action to improve teaching, with regular classroom observations and feedback linked to relevant training for staff. However, they do not make enough use of information about pupils' progress when targeting their work with staff to improve their teaching.
- Senior leaders accurately judge the school's effectiveness, and the school's improvement plans address the right areas of weakness. Leaders have been open to advice and challenge from the local authority and this has made a positive difference to the school's improvement.
- New leaders for English and mathematics have set challenging targets for each year group. It is a welcome development that they now take part in lesson observations and meetings with

teachers about their pupils' progress.

- Teachers accurately measure and record pupils' progress. However, leaders do not ensure that this information is used well enough when teachers plan lessons, or to identify pupils falling behind to check they receive the support they need to catch up.
- The school takes efficient steps to identify pupils with special educational needs. Staff seek advice from relevant specialists and there are notable examples of good progress being made. However, the school does not check routinely that these pupils all make enough progress to close any gaps with their peers. In some instances, the school's planning, record keeping and communication with parents and carers are not timely or efficient, and expert advice is not always translated well enough into practical plans where needs are particularly complex.
- The leadership of teaching assistants requires improvement so they receive well-focused professional development and guidance about their duties in the classroom and around the school, and so that their impact is better monitored.
- The wider curriculum is brought to life vividly by experiences beyond the school. For example, in the week of the inspection, a group of older pupils were visiting France, while others were planning for a future visit to Battle. However, pupils' academic learning in subjects other than English and mathematics often lacks depth and substance. This limits pupils' cultural development and their understanding of modern Britain.
- The school is making effective use of additional sports funding from the government to provide expert coaching for pupils and training for staff. As a result, the sports curriculum has expanded and the school is enjoying greater success in inter-school events.
- The school meets all safeguarding arrangements, including for the recruitment of staff and child protection.
- The school has the confidence of the majority of parents and carers, and most of those who completed the Parent View survey would recommend the school to others. The majority of parents and carers who spoke or corresponded with the inspector commended the school, and those who expressed a concern generally did so while being clear that they valued the school's work overall.
- The school makes effective provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. The school has firm links with the local parish, whose clergy take assemblies regularly. Pupils are given a voice through the school council, and they influence decisions such as the recent provision of additional play equipment. Opportunities to take responsibility and care for others, for instance as play leaders, help pupils to mature. Aspects of the curriculum are used to promote reflection and empathy, as in recent history topics about the Victorian poor and D-Day.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is a growing strength.
- Governors know the school well, recognise that it requires improvement, and are working hard to gather their own information about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, and to test information provided to them by the headteacher.
- Governors hold the headteacher to account well in meetings and through performance management. They are aware of staff performance management arrangements, how these relate to pay, and that those for support staff require improvement.
- Governors are well informed about the use of the pupil premium and the progress being made by eligible pupils. They are involved in decisions about how this money is spent and how the additional sports funding is used.
- Governors and the headteacher communicate well with parents, carers and the community, including through the website, which is regularly updated with news and policies, and through meetings and newsletters. Recently, governors offered an open meeting to parents and carers to share the findings of their parents' survey. A newsletter was then distributed to all parents and carers so that those who could not attend were kept up to date. Governors have ready systems in place to receive and respond to any concerns or complaints from parents or carers.

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	114553
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	431010
Type of school	All-through
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ball
Headteacher	Andrea McGlew
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 May 2012
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