

St Mary's Church of England (VC) Primary School

Southam Road, Banbury, OX16 2EG

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | 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 | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress has been inconsistent across the school in recent years, especially in the development of their writing and phonic skills (letters and the sounds they make).
- Teaching is inconsistent. Although it is improving, not enough is yet good or outstanding.
- Too few more able pupils reach higher levels of attainment and reach their full potential in writing.
- Pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their writing and literacy skills in a range of subjects.
- Some school leaders are new to their responsibilities and have not, until recently, been able to play a full part in the leadership of the school.
- Frequent changes of staff have led to a lack of continuity of learning for some pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are now making better progress and reaching higher standards than in previous years, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils are well cared for, lively and enjoy their learning because they have positive attitudes and are keen to do well.
- Children make a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in their personal and social development.
- The headteacher leads the school with considerable energy and ambition, and is supported effectively in the drive for school improvement by other senior leaders.
- The effectiveness of the governing body is much improved. Governors have a good knowledge of the school, are well led and determined to bring about consistent improvement in all aspects of school performance.
- The school is well supported in its development by the local authority, the diocese, other local schools and leaders in learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or part lessons. Five of these were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, five governors, a representative of the local authority and an adviser representing the diocese.
- Inspectors discussed teaching and pupils' progress with class teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils' work and their records of progress were also examined.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and discussed their reading with them.
- The inspection team considered 17 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. Inspectors examined 24 responses from parents to the school's own most recent survey of their views, and two letters and one email received during the inspection. They also spoke to a number of parents in the playground.
- The inspectors considered 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's self-evaluation, raising achievement and school development plans, and analysis of pupils' achievement and progress. Inspectors also examined safeguarding arrangements, school policies, and records of checks made by leaders on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Shela Rowan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- About half of the pupils are White British, the remainder coming from a range of ethnic heritages, the largest group being those from Pakistani backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action, and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding provided for pupils who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a Nursery class which children attend on a part-time basis, a Reception class and six other classes.
- Since the previous inspection there has been a number of changes of teaching staff.
- The school is based in two separate buildings 100 metres apart.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and achievement by ensuring that:
 - pupils, especially the more-able, are challenged more quickly to reach the higher levels of attainment of which they are capable
 - teachers take more opportunities to enable pupils to extend their own interests and thinking
 - teachers have more opportunities to observe outstanding teaching in order to develop their own skills.
- Raise the rate of pupils' improvement and increase their enjoyment of reading by:
 - consolidating the teaching of links between letters and sounds (phonics) in order to develop pupils' reading skills more effectively
 - providing a wider range of books to stimulate the interest of pupils
 - making reading records a more significant aspect of the home-school partnership, so that adults are more involved in pupils' appreciation of reading.
- Accelerate the improvement in pupils' writing skills by:
 - ensuring that pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work, by making sure that teachers regularly follow up comments they have made in their marking
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write across a range of subjects and topics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children, some of whom are at an early stage of learning English, enter the Nursery with lower levels of skills and experience levels than are typically seen for their age. This is especially so in their language and social development. Most make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, especially in their personal and physical development. However, standards are still below average when they begin Year 1.
- Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 has been inconsistent in recent years. In 2013, although progress improved, pupils did not reach the levels of which they were capable in reading, mathematics and especially writing. Pupils supported by additional funding made similar progress to others and reached similar standards.
- Progress in the learning of phonics has not been fast enough until recently to have a marked effect on pupils' reading and writing skills. There are signs of improvement now because teachers are continually improving their own skills in helping pupils to learn and understand letter sounds.
- Observations of teaching, work in pupils' books and the school's accurate progress records indicate that the achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2 is improving quickly. This includes disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, minority ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language and pupils eligible for additional funding. This is an indication of the improved teaching and effective support given by teaching assistants in these classes.
- The recent teacher assessments confirm this improvement. They show that more pupils are now reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, and a higher proportion is reaching above-average levels in reading and mathematics. However, school leaders recognise that pupils can do even better. An increasing number of the most able pupils are reaching higher levels, although not all are reaching their full potential.
- Although standards have been below average for several years at the end of Year 6, they have steadily improved since the last inspection. In 2013, pupils reached average levels in reading and mathematics, but few reached above average levels. Attainment in writing was below average, partly because pupils have too few opportunities to write across a range of subjects.
- Progress in reading was above the national average, and average in writing and mathematics, although few pupils made better than above-average progress in these areas. Evidence from this inspection shows that improvement has continued, and that more pupils are reaching higher levels. Progress is not consistent in every year group, but good progress is made consistently in Year 6.
- Throughout the school, pupils who are supported by extra funding are progressing at least as well as other pupils. There is no significant gap in attainment in reading, writing and mathematics between the two groups. Effective support is enabling disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make faster progress. This is also the case for minority ethnic pupils and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Although pupils are increasing their reading skills throughout the school, at the moment too many have no great enthusiasm for reading, especially for pleasure. Older pupils suggest that there are not enough books to match their interests. School leaders are already planning to update the library with a better selection of reading materials in order to stimulate pupils' interest in reading. Pupils record what they have read, but not all home reading record books are well kept, and there is little feedback from adults.
- Pupils are beginning to improve their achievement in other subjects, such as art and information and communication technology.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not good because too many pupils have not achieved as well as they can, especially in writing.
- Inconsistency in teaching has been a result of a number of changes of staff, although staffing has become more stable recently. The main weaknesses in teaching have been in teachers following up information of pupils' learning and progress in lessons, and teachers' insufficiently high expectations of pupils. The latter, in particular, has resulted in some of the most able pupils not being stretched enough to reach higher levels.
- Leaders have taken rigorous action to remedy these weaknesses, and teaching is improving, especially in reading and mathematics. Since last September, more teaching has become good or better and inadequate teaching is now rare.
- Effective learning is now much more in evidence in lessons, and especially in pupils' work in books, so that progress is accelerating in nearly all years. For example, Year 6 pupils made good progress in a lesson where they were required to use mathematical skills to measure ingredients for a recipe. This was because pupils applied their prior knowledge to problems, used good thinking skills and cooperated well together.
- Writing skills have been slower to improve because teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to write about a range of interests and experiences in subjects other than English. Teachers do not always follow up sufficiently thoroughly the comments they have made on pupils' work, to ensure that pupils have learned from them.
- Leaders have realised that pupils' literacy skills need to be further developed. They have already introduced new initiatives, for example in the teaching of phonics, which are having a positive effect on learning.
- Teachers' questioning skills are effective in checking pupils' learning, but sometimes opportunities are missed to extend pupils' learning by making greater use of pupils' own ideas.
- Teaching has improved in the Early Years Foundation Stage, enabling children to make increasingly rapid progress. Children are well encouraged by adults so that they quickly gain confidence and learn to care for each other. They do not always receive enough guidance, though, on how to initiate their own activities and learn for themselves.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work productively together in providing guidance and support to their pupils. Teaching assistants play an effective role in the classroom, and in giving pupils individual support. This helps the learning of all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils. Particularly effective examples of this support were observed in Year 3.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is the case in lessons and around the school. It includes activities on the field, in the playground and in the dining hall. Pupils confirm that behaviour in the school is good. They are well aware of the school's behaviour routines and what is expected of them, and of the sanctions if they misbehave.
- Most pupils work very cooperatively with each other. Occasionally, a few lose concentration and allow their learning to slip, but others try hard not to be distracted.
- Children in the Nursery and the Reception class learn quickly how to mix with each other, share toys, take turns and finish their activities. Staff work closely in partnership with parents to share the learning of their children and help them to develop their social routines.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have confidence that the staff will look after them, and they understand the purpose of the fencing and security checks in place around the school.
- The school works effectively with external professionals and services in supporting pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This was confirmed by parents who say that the school puts the child first and ensures that children are safe, happy and secure.
- There is little evidence of bullying. Pupils understand the meaning of different types of bullying, such as homophobic name calling, but are confident that staff deal with this rapidly and fairly.

- Attendance has been below average for several years. However, since last September it has shown significant improvement and is now in line with national figures. Likewise, the introduction of rigorous checks and of more information for parents has resulted in much improved punctuality. This is especially so for a small minority of pupils who were regularly late for school.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good because leaders have not yet ensured that teaching and pupils' achievement are consistently good throughout the school. A wide range of actions has been taken by senior leaders and is resulting in improvement. But this has not yet been rapid enough to meet the school's realistic targets.
- In the last eighteen months, significant changes to the management structure have led to more effective leadership and management. In particular, the headteacher has had a positive impact, leading the school with considerable energy and single-mindedness in dealing with a number of priorities for improvement. These include the quality of teaching, the rates of progress of many pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has also succeeded in raising pupils' attendance.
- In addition, new senior and middle leaders have been appointed to key management posts. They are now making a positive impact in bringing about improvement in their areas of responsibility. They and school governors have been rigorous and realistic in their evaluation of the school's performance.
- Leaders have developed improved skills in the checking and analysis of pupils' performance and this is already contributing to school improvement. They use additional funding effectively, and nearly all eligible pupils are making progress similar to that of their peers.
- Teachers, several of whom are new to the school, are monitored and supported on a regular basis by leaders, and by external trainers and advisers. Teachers are encouraged to evaluate their own practice and are given appropriate training. Leaders ensure that any pay increases or promotions are related to teachers' performance in reaching targets.
- Leaders use the new sport funding effectively to give pupils an increasing range of activities which develop their skills and their knowledge of how to live healthily. They are also steadily expanding a range of new learning opportunities for pupils, including more out-of-school clubs.
- The school promotes equal opportunities well and relations between pupils from different backgrounds are good. This results in no discrimination. It contributes positively to the good behaviour of pupils and effective promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. International days, celebrating the pupils' different cultures, are also helpful in encouraging a happy and respectful school environment.
- The local authority and diocese have worked closely with the school in the last two years and have helped it to improve. School leaders have also been well supported by other school leaders and staff, and external advisers.
- The positive views of many parents are typified by one's comment that, 'My child comes home enthused with his learning.' A small minority of parents express concerns about some aspects of the school. Inspectors found that the school responds effectively to issues when they arise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body, led by a new but expert Chair, has improved its effectiveness since the last inspection. Governors know the school well, and challenge leaders regularly on all aspects of the school's performance. They work directly with specific leaders whom they can challenge and hold to account. The governors understand the link between staff performance, pupils' progress and pay decisions. This has led to them being more aware of the quality of teaching and pupils' performance. Governors understand how the school uses extra funding for particular groups of pupils, and how they are progressing as a result. They have a good knowledge of the use of the new sport funding. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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 | 123094 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 442647 |

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 controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 227 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lynne Parsons |
| Headteacher | Kathryn Crawford |
| Date of previous school inspection | 10–11 October 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01295 263026 |
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