

St Edburg's Church of England (VA) School

Cemetery Road, Bicester, OX26 6BB

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		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 over time has not been good enough, particularly in mathematics.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and the most able is too variable.
- Teaching does not help all pupils make good progress over time because it is not always good enough.
- Teaching in mathematics is not precise enough to improve standards.
- The early years provision requires improvement because not enough children have the skills they need by the time they move to Year 1.
- Senior leaders have not analysed in sufficient detail how effectively additional funding to help disadvantaged pupils is used.
- Not all middle leaders are fully involved and supporting improvements in the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- Systems to ensure governors hold senior leaders to account are not strong enough.
- The school has had limited success in involving parent and carers in their children's learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 rose last year.
- Pupils' well-being and safety are at the heart of the school's work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy learning. Their attendance is much better than it was in the recent past.
- The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully tackled some of the school's weaknesses over the last year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted with no notice due to concerns about a decline in standards and low attendance in 2013.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including information on pupils' progress, the school's evaluation of its work and its improvement plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors visited 18 lessons, including two that were jointly observed with the acting headteacher, and attended an assembly. They also heard pupils read.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils to talk to them about their work and the school. They also talked with pupils in lessons and around school, and observed break times and the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met with teachers, senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also spoke briefly with a small number of parents and carers as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Una Stevens

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Edburg's is a smaller-than-average primary school. Most pupils are White British and nearly all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has increased since the last inspection and is now above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for the pupil premium which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care) has also increased since the last inspection. Around one in four pupils is eligible, which is similar to the national average.
- More pupils join or leave the school during the course of the school year than is typical.
- In 2013 the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher were appointed internally from September 2013. The previous headteacher remained in post for one day per week as executive headteacher until the end of August 2014 when he left to take up a new post.
- The school is due to expand to take nursery-age children and two classes in each year group from September 2015 when it moves to a new site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring teachers' expectation of all pupils are high and that there is appropriate support and challenge for pupils of all abilities
 - making sure that teachers check pupils' understanding during lessons and adapt their teaching accordingly
 - ensuring that marking and feedback are always helpful and that pupils have time to respond and improve their work
 - making sure that mathematics teaching is more precise and that pupils are taught how to use their skills.
- Improve early years provision by:
 - making sure that staff's expectations of children are higher
 - ensuring a clear focus on learning in all activities
 - developing staff's understanding of how to join in children's play and talk to children to support their learning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing middle leaders so that they are better able to help the school improve
 - strengthening partnerships with parents and carers so that they understand how they can support their children's learning and are more ambitious about what they can achieve.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Until recently, the school has not been improving fast enough. Standards in mathematics are too variable.
- The acting headteacher and deputy have, however, taken effective action in the last year. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved, as has teaching in some classes. Standards rose at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 in 2014. The number of days lost through absence has greatly reduced.
- Senior leaders know what additional support has worked for individual pupils and how well different groups of pupils are doing in each class. They have not analysed in sufficient detail how effective different support across the school is and whether best use is made of additional funding, such as the pupil premium.
- The quality of middle leadership is too variable. Some are clear what needs to be done and what is expected of them. They are demonstrating that they can lead improvement in their area of responsibility. Others are not clear what the priorities are or what they should be doing.
- The school successfully helps pupils to 'learn the wisdom to lead our lives'. Explicit teaching of the school's values, and opportunities to explore their feelings and the impact of their actions on others, support pupils' moral and social development very well. Spiritual development is strong. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective in assemblies and through special events such as Narnia Week, which focused on creation. Art and music are used well to develop an understanding of other cultures, although pupils are not always aware that they live in a multicultural society.
- Well planned topics make the most of first-hand experiences and links between subjects. Plans have been reviewed in the light of new national requirements to ensure pupils' knowledge and skills in a range of subjects are developed over time. The school does not have firm plans in place for teaching a modern language.
- Additional sports funding is used well. Through its membership of a local sports partnership, the school has widened the range of activities on offer and increased pupils' participation. The Change4life club encourages pupils who are less active to lead a healthier life. Good use of a mentor from the partnership is helping staff to develop their skills in teaching physical education.
- Ensuring the well-being and safety of its pupils underpins the school's work. Good links with pre-school providers and strong partnerships with external agencies help the school to meet pupils' social and emotional needs and keep pupils safe. Systems for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- Parents and carers are satisfied with the information they receive about their child's progress. Attendance at parents' evenings to find out how well their child is doing is good. Efforts to encourage parents to come into school to find out how they can support their children's learning and help their children achieve more have been less successful.
- The local authority's risk assessment of the school earlier this year, and more recent visits, have given the authority an accurate picture of the areas that need improvement. The local authority gave the school some support to improve mathematics last year and is in the process of agreeing what support the school needs over the coming year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive of the school's ethos and committed to its success in the future as the school moves to the new site and expands. They have invested a lot of time over a number of years to dealing with these plans. Governors are aware of, and meet, their statutory responsibilities. Key policies, such as those that deal with pupils' safety and link teachers' pay to pupils' achievement, are reviewed regularly and spending is monitored carefully. Governors know how additional funds are being spent to raise standards, but do not ask for the level of information they need to check what difference it is making.
 - Governors have an overview of the school's strengths and its priorities for further improvement. They receive and discuss information about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and know what the school is doing to tackle underperformance. They do not always challenge senior leaders enough on these matters.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Parents and carers are unanimous that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved. Staff set high

standards for pupils' behaviour around school and pupils consistently rise to these expectations so that there is little need for reminders about rules. They are caring towards each other, respectful to staff and welcoming to new classmates and visitors.

- Pupils enjoy learning and generally have very positive attitudes to their work. Occasionally, they do not settle quickly to tasks when they are not clear what is expected of them, but a quick reminder is all that is needed to get them back on track.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Without exception, parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire were of the view that their children are safe and happy at the school.
- 'Early bird' sessions ensure that pupils arrive at school on time and concerted efforts to improve attendance have paid off. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of being at school every day. Improvements over the last 12 months have meant that in the last school year attendance was average. Currently, it is above average, not least because of the school's success in getting pupils with a record of very low attendance into school almost every day.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They know who they can turn to if they have a problem and are confident that matters, such as rare instances of name calling, will be dealt with effectively. A well-planned range of activities helps pupils to understand the risks they might face and how to keep themselves safe in different situations. They know when it is all right to keep a secret and when it is not.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to enable all groups of pupils to make good progress over time.
- Teachers do not always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in a lesson or over time. When all pupils are set the same work it is sometimes too difficult for some and too easy for others.
- Questions are not always used well to check thoroughly what pupils have learnt and what they understand during lessons.
- The quality of marking and feedback is variable. Where it is used effectively it supports pupils' learning. Teachers make it clear what pupils have achieved and how they can improve. They regularly set aside sufficient time for pupils to correct or redraft their work. In other instances, feedback is too superficial to be helpful or books are not marked regularly. Marking is better in writing than mathematics; marking in other subjects does not pay enough attention to pupils' writing skills.
- Inspectors saw pupils learning well where teachers knew from previous lessons, or marking pupils' work, what pupils did not fully understand and adapted their teaching accordingly. They went back over work, skilfully questioning pupils to check what they understood and explaining clearly what they had not grasped. They praised pupils for having a go and tackled things in a different way to help them overcome difficulties.
- The introduction of carefully structured, daily teaching of phonics last year ensured that the large majority of pupils knew the sounds that letters make by the end of Year 1. Teaching in these sessions is precise and proceeds at appropriate pace. It is less effective on occasions when more able pupils who have already grasped what is being taught are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils are not taught to use these skills when reading and writing in other lessons as a matter of course.
- The teaching of mathematics lacks precision. Concepts are not always explained clearly. Pupils are not routinely taught to understand and use mathematical language or how to use what they know to solve problems. Sometimes, teachers do not check the accuracy of pupils' work during lessons and miss pupils who have not understood.
- The quality and support of teaching assistants vary. They make a valuable contribution to lessons where they are well trained and understand what pupils are learning and how to support them. They are less effective when their questioning is not focused or where they do not have the experience or sufficient training to meet individual pupils' specific needs.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not consistently make good progress over time. Too much relies on pupils making rapid progress in Year 6 to reach the standards they are capable of by the time they leave the school.
- Standards in English steadily improved following the last inspection and were above average in 2012. A sharp drop in 2013 saw reading and writing standards fall below average, although pupils made good progress from low starting points at the beginning of Year 3. Last year's Year 6 pupils also made good

progress over time in reading and writing. As their starting points were higher, standards were close to average in 2014. Much of their progress in writing, however, was during their last year at the school.

- Standards in mathematics have not improved year on year because teaching is not good enough. A sharp drop in standards in 2013 meant that Year 6 pupils were a year behind other pupils of the same age when they left the school. Last year's Year 6 pupils made good progress from Year 3 to reach standards close to average, but again much of that progress was made during their last year at the school. Progress in mathematics across the school is too variable.
- Until recently, younger pupils in the school have not achieved as well as they should. Too few had the basic skills they needed by the end of Year 1, or reached the level typical for their age by the end of Year 2. In 2014, improvements in teaching ensured pupils' reading and writing skills were close to average by the end of Year 2. There was less improvement in mathematics and standards remained below average.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding compared to their classmates varies. Sometimes, where their starting points are higher, as in 2013, good progress helps them to catch up by the end of Year 6. For others, progress is not fast enough from year to year. In 2014, despite rapid progress in Year 6, these pupils were 10 months behind their classmates in reading and just over a year behind in writing and mathematics when they left at age 11.
- The progress made by the most-able pupils is too variable. This is because teaching does not always challenge them. In some lessons, teachers just expect them to complete more of the same work as other pupils, rather than work that will develop their thinking.
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those who join part way through their education reflects the variations in the quality of teaching. These pupils make good progress where teaching is good because their needs are well met in lessons as well as through any additional support they receive. Good progress is unusual in mathematics because teaching is not as strong and the extra support pupils receive tends to be for reading and writing.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Not enough children are ready for the next stage in their learning when they leave the Reception class.
- Good relationships with parents, a caring approach and clear expectations from staff help children to settle quickly into school. Even at this early stage in the year there were no tears at the beginning of the day.
- Most children join the Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding below those typical for their age. Too many do not catch up because they do not acquire the early reading, writing and mathematics skills they need quickly. In 2013, only a third of children were well prepared for the move to Year 1. This rose to just over half in 2014, but nearly half of children did not have the writing and number skills they needed for the move to Year 1. A third of children did not have good enough early reading skills.
- Children do not make good progress during their first year at school because insufficient attention is paid to what they are learning throughout each day. Where activities are carefully planned, teaching focuses on developing children's skills, although sometimes the most-able children are not challenged. At other times, the purpose of activities is not clear to the children, or the adults with them. Not all adults understand how to join in children's play and talk to children to support their learning.
- Senior leaders have identified the weaknesses in the early years provision. They are taking appropriate action and advice from the local authority to make improvements.

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	123188
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	449187

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	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Smith
Headteacher	Margaret Kunzer (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 January 2011
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