

Mells Church of England First School

Mells Green, Mells, Frome, BA11 3QE

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Require improvement	3
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 yet good because:

- Pupils' achievement, especially in writing, has not been good enough. Too few pupils have made good progress from their individual starting points at the school.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not consistently good across all years.
- Pupils who are disabled, have special educational needs and those who are eligible for additional funding make similar progress to other pupils, and this is not yet good enough. Over time, too few are making the accelerated progress that would normally be expected.
- Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has not been good enough.
- When learning lacks challenge some pupils become restless, attitudes to learning worsen and they do not always concentrate or work hard.
- Teaching for some time has not ensured that all groups of pupils learn sufficiently well. Activities provided by teachers do not always provide appropriate challenge to pupils, especially the most able, to allow them to achieve well.
- Some teachers do not have high expectations for their pupils and do not check their work meticulously enough to challenge mistakes.
- Leaders have not checked the quality of teaching rigorously enough to ensure that teachers successfully help pupils to achieve well. Leaders, managers and governors have not ensured that teaching and achievement have improved enough to be good.
- Leaders and governors do not have a clear understanding of how well the additional funding is helping to raise the achievement of eligible pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 improved significantly to average in 2014.
- All parents are highly positive about the school and say that their children are safe and well looked after. Pupils agree.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They behave well outside lessons. Attendance has improved and is above average.
- Leaders ensure that spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is promoted well through a wide range of subjects and activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in seven lessons, three of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also observed small-group teaching of phonics (linking letters and sounds).
- The inspector looked at pupils' work in their books and spoke to others about their work and other aspects of school. He observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime.
- He held meetings with the headteacher and members of staff. They discussed pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy and the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- The inspector examined a range of school documentation including records of the quality of teaching, the school's information on pupils' progress, the sport funding action plan, the school improvement plan and records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- A meeting was held with two governors, including the vice chair. The inspector spoke with an officer from the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- The views of parents were taken into consideration, including the 62 who responded to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View. The inspector also spoke to several parents at the start of the school day. Staff views were considered in the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector visited the breakfast club.
- During this inspection, the inspector asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement for children looked after, on free school meals and the most able pupils. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of support services.

Inspection team

John Cavill, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mells is a smaller-than-average-sized first school.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are taught in two separate year classes. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught together in a single class.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. This additional funding supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or are looked after by the local authority.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club managed by the governing body.
- A private nursery is located adjacent to the school. It is not managed by the governors and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise pupils' achievement, especially in writing, by ensuring that teachers:
 - ensure work challenges pupils and engages them in learning, especially the most able
 - accelerate the progress of pupils by moving them on more quickly when they demonstrate they understand what they are doing
 - set high expectations for pupils and check their work accurately so that all mistakes are highlighted to eliminate any misunderstanding
 - check that pupils understand and have used teachers' comments that explain how to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - leaders, at all levels, checking more frequently and rigorously the effect that teachers are having on improving pupils' achievement
 - increasing leaders' and governors' understanding of the progress of different groups of pupils, especially those who are eligible for additional funding, to ensure additional support is effective.

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

require improvement

- Checks of teaching and learning undertaken by school leaders to ensure all groups of pupils make good progress have not been rigorous enough. This is especially the case for pupils who are eligible for additional funding. Leaders and governors do not have a clear understanding of what progress these pupils should be making and are not effectively challenging teachers to improve progress for these pupils.
- Previous information on pupils' progress, especially for Years 3 and 4, was found to be unreliable. This led to an unclear understanding, by leaders and governors, of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, leaders were unable to accurately monitor the progress of pupils.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school, which is shared by all staff and governors. Along with governors, she has successfully challenged weaker teaching at the school and has made some significant improvements, most notably in teaching in Key Stage 1 and pupils' attendance. Therefore, the school is showing that it has the capacity to sustain further improvements.
- Teachers and other adults at the school are committed to improving their practice in order to improve pupils' achievement. Teachers regularly undertake training and are reflective of their own teaching. They understand the correlation between their good teaching and pupils' good achievement.
- Middle leaders are becoming increasingly active in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility, for example, by scrutinising pupils' work. However, along with senior leaders, they do not undertake these checks with enough rigour to ensure pupils' good achievement.
- Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with a disability or special educational needs require improvement. Regular reviews are undertaken to check the progress of these pupils with the class teacher. However, as these pupils do not make good progress, checks on the additional support these pupils receive is not carried out robustly enough.
- The curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to extend their experiences of the local and wider community. Visits and 'welly walks' in the local area are a regular feature and provide pupils with memorable experiences. A range of whole-school themed topics, such as 'The UK and Europe', ensures pupils will be prepared well for life in modern Britain. Activities such as the Year 3 and 4 residential visit and an opportunity to experience learning at forest school provide pupils with opportunities to work together. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps foster their caring attitudes towards each other.
- The provision for sport is well planned to increase pupils' attainment in sport. Leaders use the additional funding effectively to provide specialist sports provision alongside sport delivered by school staff. Regular activities such as swimming for all pupils is having a positive impact on pupils' physical well-being and understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Pupils say they enjoy taking part in sport.
- The staff do not tolerate discrimination of any kind, ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in the full curriculum. Almost all parents believe the school is led and managed well.
- The local authority does not challenge school leaders effectively enough to support school improvement. Local authority officers do not have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There is very little discussion between the local authority and the school about pupils who are vulnerable, and a lack of understanding of how well they are achieving.
- Leaders are proactive in ensuring that children at the school are safe and implement rigorous safeguarding procedures. All members of school staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and undertake regular training.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors support the school and are keen to see it do well. They are fully involved in the life of the school and visit it regularly, undertaking observations with the headteacher to see the work of the school. They have challenged teachers to improve and have successfully supported the headteacher in eliminating inadequate teaching. Governors have a general idea of how well pupils are achieving when compared to pupils nationally but are not yet fully analysing the progress of groups of pupils, especially those who are eligible for additional funding. There have been some changes of personnel within the governing body and governors have undertaken training as appropriate. Governors are involved in making decisions about teachers' pay and in ensuring that teachers' pay is aligned to their performance. They are fully involved in school self-evaluation and setting the school action plan for improvement. They have contributed to decisions about the spending of additional funding, for example the pupil premium. Governors ensure statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are fully in place.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. Although pupils are friendly and polite, their attitudes towards their learning are not always as positive when teaching does not fully engage them.
- In lessons, pupils sometimes become distracted and fidgety and lose concentration. Pupils do not routinely get themselves prepared for their work in lessons, often waiting for the adults to provide everything for them. This results in some chatting, which often carries on when the teacher is talking to them. This is because some teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils and do not always provide them with appropriate work. This is in marked contrast to when pupils are given challenging work to do. They become engrossed and excited and their attitudes towards learning then are stronger.
- During break and lunchtimes the school is calm and pupils play well together. The atmosphere in the playground and on the field is happy and welcoming. Around the school, pupils are respectful of each other and enjoy the range of activities available. Attendance has improved following some concerted effort by the headteacher and is now above average. Pupils are punctual arriving at school.
- Pupils typically get on well together. They show care and sensitivity towards those pupils who have additional difficulties. They act maturely when working together in lessons and listen respectfully while others share their views. Pupils with specific needs are supported well by teaching assistants to help them work with their peers in class and ensure their behaviour does not adversely affect other pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The site is safe and secure; pupils know their boundaries and take care when moving around the school. Systems to ensure pupils safety are well understood. Pupils were able to explain that the different colour scarves on the 'keeper's head' statue would indicate to them if they could use the field or not for safety reasons. The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View or spoke to an inspector said that their children are safe and well behaved.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They say that incidences of bullying are rare, but when pupils fall out or call names they know an adult will help them to sort it out. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and how to keep safe when using technology, including the internet.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time, particularly in writing, to help pupils make good progress and achieve well. This has resulted in pupils' attainment in writing being consistently lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always plan work that reflects pupils' abilities and builds upon what they already know. This is especially true for the most able pupils, who are often given work that is too easy for them, limiting their progress. When teaching is not challenging enough pupils become restless and talkative, slowing their learning and preventing them making the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils have an understanding of what they have to do in lessons. However, teachers do not always monitor pupils in lessons closely enough to move them on to harder work when they demonstrate they understand what they are doing. This limits pupils' ability to make faster progress.
- Teachers do not set high enough expectations for pupils. Work presented to teachers by pupils is often not as good as they are able to produce, lacking quality and presentation. This is also the case when pupils present work that contains misspellings, incorrect punctuation and vocabulary or letters and numbers written incorrectly. Teachers do not always meticulously check pupils' work for errors and sometimes say the work is good when clearly it is not. This leads to pupils misunderstanding what good work is.
- When teachers provide helpful comments to show pupils how they can improve their work, these are not consistently being used by pupils to improve their work. Teachers do not always follow up previous comments to ensure pupils fully understand them. This is limiting their progress.
- Pupils can explain their personal learning goals in literacy and numeracy and know what they have to do in order to achieve them. Teachers usually ensure that these goals are checked when work is marked in literacy and numeracy, but less so in other subjects.
- Teachers plan lessons to make use of teaching assistants to support pupils, especially those who are disabled or have special educational needs. This ensures these pupils are included fully in lessons as much as possible.
- Despite weaknesses in teaching, all parents felt that their children's learning was effective.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because their progress, especially in writing, has not been good enough for some time.
- Since the previous inspection, too few pupils have made good progress across the school. Progress in

writing made by pupils in all years is still not quick enough. As a result, standards in writing at the end of Year 4 are lower than in reading and mathematics.

- An analysis of pupil progress information at the school and a scrutiny of pupils' work indicate that their progress is not good enough. Overgenerous assessments were made by teachers, especially in Years 3 and 4, of pupils' attainment. This has resulted in the majority of pupils making only expected progress, leaving the school with attainment similar to that expected for their age.
- A scrutiny of current pupils' work indicates that progress in writing has started to improve. This follows the introduction of a programme to improve pupils' achievement in writing at the start of the last academic year. Improved teaching, secured in Key Stage 1, has led to the significant improvement in attainment in the Year 2 national tests in 2014. However, pupils' attainment in writing remains below that in reading and mathematics.
- All groups of pupils make similar progress in both English and mathematics. Pupils who are eligible for additional funding are not being challenged enough to accelerate their progress. Consequently, they are not, given their starting points, being supported well enough to reach their full potential and close the gap with other pupils at the school.
- The most able pupils are not being challenged to make good progress. Often they are given work that is too easy for them, and this is limiting their progress. This is especially the case in writing.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not fast enough. They achieve less well than other pupils at the school from their individual starting points.
- Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check are above the national average. The school has been successful in ensuring pupils learn their phonic sounds systematically. This is having a positive effect on their ability to read. Pupils are developing their reading skills well in regular guided reading sessions. Pupils read regularly at home and enjoy reading aloud in school, so their language development is strong.
- Greater numbers of pupils are taking part in a wider range of sports supported by the additional school sports funding. Pupils say they enjoy taking part in sport.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children join the school in Reception with skill and understanding levels that are typically similar to those that would normally be expected for their age. Some children arrive with skills that are weaker. However, observing the children in the current Reception Year demonstrated that almost all of them were at an appropriate level of development for the start of their school life.
- The proportion of children who attain a good level of development by the time they move into Key Stage 1 is broadly average. Therefore, achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement.
- Lessons are planned well to make good use of the outside space. Activities are provided for by adults that extend children's learning, and these are being used to good effect in numeracy. Children continued to develop their counting skills with activities such as looking for bugs and counting how many there were. However, in literacy this was not as well developed when there were limited activities to encourage mark making following their work on letters.
- Children were keen to take part in all activities that were on offer and responded well to staff instructions. They demonstrated good listening skills and were able to maintain concentration well in whole-class sessions. Children play together safely and are considerate.
- A knowledgeable teaching assistant supported the children well, especially those who are disabled or have a special educational need.
- A significant proportion of children arrive from the Nursery adjacent to the school. There are transition arrangements in place to ensure children start Reception well prepared. Accurate assessments are being made against the Early Years outcomes. However, in the past the assessments undertaken by school staff when children start in Reception have been inaccurate and have led to leaders being unable to correctly judge the achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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	123767
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	448530

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	93
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Williams
Headteacher	Lara Tatam
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 February 2010
Telephone number	01373 812380
Fax number	01373 813523
Email address	ltatam@educ.somerset.gov.uk

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