

# Cold Ash St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Cold Ash Hill, Cold Ash, Thatcham, RG18 9PT

## Inspection dates

6–7 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils' progress is good in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. As a result, attainment at the end of Year 6 is above the national average.
- Teaching is typically good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to make sure that pupils enjoy learning and achieve well.
- The few disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled and have special educational needs are given work at the right level. The work takes account of their particular needs so they progress as well as other pupils.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a positive start to school life. They settle quickly and make rapid progress in the Reception class.
- Pupils are happy at school and work hard. They feel safe. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes contribute well to their learning. They are proud of their school and their achievements.
- The vast majority of parents are extremely supportive of the school. They agree that the welfare of all pupils and the development of pupils' personal skills are strengths of the school.
- The headteacher and governors provide effective leadership. Their drive for improvement has led to improvement in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school provides pupils with an interesting range of subjects, topics and experiences which contribute very strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator do not always have enough opportunity to enable them to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress across their subject areas.
- In some classes, teachers do not expect enough of the most-able pupils to help them make the best possible progress.
- Pupils do not always respond to teachers' comments in marking and improve their work.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they are learning or the steps they need to take to be successful.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons, of which one was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils' progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils' work. They heard groups of pupils reading and spoke with pupils about behaviour and the safety arrangements at the school.
- The views of 57 parents were analysed through the Parent View website. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents.
- The views expressed by the 19 staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

## Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Teresa Hill

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of the pupils are White British. This is above average.
- One pupil in 30 speaks English as an additional language. This is below the national average.
- One pupil in 10 is disabled or has special educational needs supported at school action. This is average. One pupil in 20 is supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. This is below the national average. No pupil has an education, health and care plan.
- Very few pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. This is below the national average.
- An increasing number of pupils arrive at the school at times other than the start of Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2014. Prior to this date she was executive headteacher of this school and a neighbouring school.
- During the inspection, Year 4 pupils were out of school on a day visit.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically outstanding by ensuring that:
  - expectations for the most-able pupils are equally high in all classes
  - pupils know what they are learning and the steps they need to take to be successful in achieving this
  - pupils act on the teachers' written guidance and improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by developing subject leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, so they are able to take a full part in evaluating and improving the work of the school in raising standards.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has introduced robust systems to track and monitor the progress for all groups of pupils. Systems to carry out checks on teaching, set challenging targets and manage the performance of staff are thorough. As a result, teaching and pupils' progress are now securely good.
  - Leaders, including governors, have tackled the areas for improvement that were identified at the previous inspection successfully. This has resulted in improvements in pupils' achievement across the school and demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.
  - The school's development plan and self-evaluation are accurate. The school's leaders have a realistic view of the school and its priorities for improvement.
  - The headteacher has acted decisively to tackle some weaknesses in the teaching of spelling which led to underachievement in 2013. This intervention halted the decline and achievement has improved.
  - The headteacher is supported by all staff who are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. However, the headteacher is fully aware of the need to improve the subject leaders' and the special educational needs coordinator's contribution to the raising of standards by developing their role in checking pupils' progress and improving the quality of teaching in their subject areas.
  - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is embedded in the school's values, beliefs and subjects taught so that tolerance and other British values are promoted well.
  - Assemblies and displays around the school provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on and consider important values. For example, one display asked the pupils to think about what the school's values mean to them. One pupil responded, 'Older pupils are generous. When I first started school my buddy helped me.' This response gave other pupils the opportunity to reflect on how they had applied this value in their own lives.
  - Additional money to improve pupils' participation and ability in sport has been used well. Teachers' confidence in the teaching of physical education has improved. As a result, pupils take a more active part in a wider range of sports during school time and in after-school clubs.
  - Pupil premium funding is used to good effect to support the small number of disadvantaged pupils and ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make good progress during their time at the school.
  - The curriculum is organised around various themes. There is sharp focus on teaching reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum provides opportunities for promoting pupils' skills to think and apply knowledge and to develop their interests and talents. It is enriched through a range of educational visits and inviting visitors into the school. The school further enhances pupils' experiences by providing themed days or weeks, such as 'Victorian Day', residential visits and 'Science Week'. The use of the school grounds for gardening, Eco-school activities and events such as 'Dads drop off', concerts and strong links with the local church develop the community aspects of the school well.
  - There is strong emphasis on valuing others and their cultures so that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. This ensures that good relationships are promoted successfully. The school also ensures equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination. The recently opened 'Prayer Room' is enthusiastically used by pupils.
  - The school's child protection and safeguarding systems are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Robust systems are in place to check pupils' attendance closely and provide extra help to those pupils who may need it.
  - The school works well with a range of schools in the local cluster for checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work, teacher training, and for developing the new curriculum.
  - The local authority has provided effective support and advice to help the school improve pupils' achievement and to develop governors' skills. Rightly, the local authority's support recognises that the school is able to direct its own improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors bring their professional skills to their roles and undertake a range of training and development so that they are able to judge the work of the school for themselves. They understand how well pupils are achieving in comparison to those in other schools. Governors set ambitious targets for staff performance and check pupils' progress to hold staff to account, including in making salary decisions. Governors help to identify appropriate areas for development, devise action plans and use information about pupils' achievement to check progress against these. They each take responsibility for a subject and use assessment information to identify the improvement needed. Finance is matched to

improvement plans and carefully monitored. Governors ensure that additional funding is improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The primary sports funding is used to benefit every pupil.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This contributes to their good learning in classrooms. Pupils are proud of their school.
- The school's values, such as generosity, respect and cooperation, contribute to the positive attitudes that pupils have towards each other. Pupils usually show courtesy to each other, to all staff and to visitors. On the playground, most pupils play well together and show consideration to others.
- Pupils understand and support the school's behaviour code. They report that behaviour is usually good and that any poor behaviour is dealt with quickly and fairly.
- Pupils move around the school calmly and orderly. However, behaviour at lunchtimes is not always as strong as at other times of the school day.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities. Roles such as sports ambassadors, school councillors, buddies and monitors have a good effect on their personal development.
- Pupils new to the school are quickly integrated into the life of the school and community. Provision for pupils' welfare, including their personal, social and emotional development, is a strength of the school. There have been no fixed-term exclusions since the previous inspection. A small number of pupils have behavioural problems. They benefit from individual attention and support so that their behaviour improves markedly as they move through the school.
- Pupils spoken to cannot recall any incidents of racist comments. They say that most pupils get on well together. They report that incidents of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, do not occur. They have confidence in staff that, should any incident occur, it would be dealt with swiftly.
- Pupils say that staff check carefully that pupils do not use derogatory language or say unkind things about individuals and groups who may be different to them in some way.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to their good progress but, occasionally, when teaching does not engage their interest, a few participate less well.
- Most pupils and parents feel that behaviour is good in school. The inspection team came to a similar view.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school and the curriculum supports them well in learning how to stay safe in a wide range of situations. They have a good understanding of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites.
- Procedures to ensure child protection are effective and are monitored regularly by leaders. Risk assessments, both within the school grounds and for visits, are rigorously completed and checked.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire consider that their children are safe and happy at school. Inspectors endorse this view.
- Governors ensure that all staff are appropriately trained so that they can undertake their roles. A detailed annual audit of safeguarding systems is overseen by governors and fully reported at governing body meetings.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Pupils' books and rates of progress show that teaching is typically good over time. Teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise. They use these effectively to provide a wide range of activities that promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well.
- Staff have established a calm and orderly learning environment which helps pupils to make good progress.
- Where learning is best teachers ask probing questions to make pupils think carefully. This helps pupils to learn well because they are able to share and develop their ideas. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson pupils enjoyed discussing their problem-solving challenges with each other. They were eager to answer questions and contribute to their learning and this supported their good progress.
- Teachers treat pupils with respect and are interested in what they have to say. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and respond readily to tasks with interest and enthusiasm.
- The high priority given to the teaching of how letters link with sounds (phonics) ensures that pupils read

well through the school. Younger pupils demonstrate that they can read with good understanding while older pupils read with confidence and enthusiasm. The older pupils have a love of books and can talk confidently about the authors they enjoy reading.

- The most-able pupils make rapid progress, develop high-level skills and reach high standards by the end of Year 6. However, pupils are not stretched consistently in every class because they have to complete whole-class activities before moving on to more challenging tasks.
- Staff use the rewards system well to ensure that pupils take great pride in their achievement and behaviour.
- Pupils' homework makes a significant contribution to their progress because it includes a focus on reading, number and spelling skills each week, and the opportunity to explore their learning in more detail with their families.
- Most teaching assistants make a very positive contribution to the learning of pupils of all abilities. They are highly skilled and complement the work of the teachers. They receive training in a range of support programmes which enable the pupils they work with to make good progress.
- Pupils who arrive at the school at times other than the start of the Reception class settle quickly and make similar progress to their classmates.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers' marking of pupils' work has improved over time. Where written comments recognise success and provide guidance for pupils on how they can improve their work it moves pupils on in their learning. However, the marking is not always as effective and pupils do not routinely respond to this advice and improve their work.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they are learning or the steps they need to take to be successful. When this happens pupils' progress slows.

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. This is because their work is exciting and focused on topics that they enjoy.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in the Year 6 national tests in 2014 in reading, writing, mathematics and spelling, grammar and punctuation was above average. Rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014 has resulted in improved standards in all classes. Evidence seen in books during the inspection shows that this trend is continuing. The school's recent focus on spelling has been successful in addressing identified weaknesses which limited pupils' attainment in grammar, spelling and punctuation tests.
- Most children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are typical for their age. The quality of their language, confidence and ability to co-operate with their classmates are typical strengths. Children settle quickly and form good relationships with their classmates and adults. All children make good progress, so that almost three quarters of them achieve a good level of development by the end of the year. This means that they are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- All groups of pupils learn well and teachers build on the foundations laid in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The vast majority of pupils, including those who are new to the school, make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils in Year 1 develop their skills in phonics well. In 2014, they achieved levels above those nationally in the Year 1 phonics check.
- In 2014, pupils in Year 2 achieved standards in reading and mathematics which were above average.
- Year 6 pupils also reached standards which were above the national average in English and mathematics in 2014. The school has focused successfully on improving rates of progress for all pupils, including the most-able pupils. An increasing number of pupils attained the higher Levels 5 and 6 in the national tests.
- Pupils read to a high standard and talk with great enthusiasm about their books in all classes. They understand their reading and know how to use books and the internet to find information. Guided reading groups focus on stretching pupils' ability to understand text through teachers' challenging questions.
- High-level skills in English and mathematics are reflected in pupils' workbooks and school tracking data.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well in most lessons and in well-planned extension activities. These improvements are a result of the strong teaching of older pupils, which continually challenges them to tackle harder work as well as additional work within the cluster of local schools. However, this challenge is not consistently high in all classes so that pupils' progress is uneven in a few classes.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because work in lessons and results from assessments are used to check on how well they are learning and to adapt their

tasks whenever necessary.

- There are too few pupils in school who are eligible for support through the pupil premium to make accurate comparisons between their achievement and that of their classmates in school, or with similar pupils nationally.

### The early years provision

is good

- Warm, welcoming relationships and consistently applied routines help children to settle quickly. Children behave well because they become absorbed in activities that motivate them to want to learn. Whether they are playing indoors or outdoors, they behave in ways that keep them safe.
- The teaching of phonics is clearly focused on children's needs and this ensures that they make good progress.
- Good teaching helps children to make good progress. Adults assess children accurately. Staff use this information to plan activities that engage children and support them in becoming confident learners. The good range of play and learning activities contribute well to the children's physical and emotional health as well as their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children demonstrate a great enthusiasm for learning.
- Staff work well as a team and use the children's 'learning journey' profiles effectively to promote good communication between home and school. As a result, parents are involved fully in their children's learning.
- Leaders know which areas need to improve because they check the effectiveness of their work. There are effective systems in place to track children's progress and to plan new learning.
- There are effective systems to safeguard children in the Reception class.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109958
<b>Local authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	444306

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	184
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Neil Ralph
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Ball
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18–19 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 862600
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