

Benenden Church of England Primary School

The Village Green, Benenden, Cranbrook, Kent, TN17 4DN

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Some Year 2 pupils did not make enough progress in 2014, given their above average entry points to Year 1. This particularly affected the most able pupils.
- Standards in mathematics across the school fell in 2014.
- Pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable because they are not challenged sufficiently and expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough.
- Standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling are not high enough at Year 6. They do not match the above average standards seen in reading.
- There is some less effective teaching where behaviour is not managed as effectively as elsewhere and the pace of learning is affected, despite many improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership has improved. Although pupils' achievement has not yet fully caught up, senior leaders have, in a relatively short time, addressed key weaknesses, particularly in teaching.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. Pupils' progress in reading across the school is good.
- Weaknesses in Early Years provision have been addressed and children are now learning more effectively.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in most lessons, feel very safe and behave well.
- The school works very hard to meet the needs of all pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are learning more rapidly so that the gaps between their attainment and that of their peers, both in school and nationally, are closing.
- Gypsy/Roma pupils have high attendance, are valued members of the school and achieve well.
- Governance has improved significantly. Governors are well informed about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and are helping to drive forward improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 13 lessons, three of which were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils’ written work for both the current and the last school year. They listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the school’s senior and subject leaders and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 51 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement and records of the school’s checks on the quality of teaching. They also considered local authority review reports, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to track pupils’ progress.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Senior

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Benenden Church of England Primary School is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There is a small group of pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage.
- At about one in every twelve, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is about one in every twelve pupils and is well below the national average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- There are six classes. Early Years Foundation Stage children, all of whom attend full-time, are taught in a separate Reception class. There are single-year classes for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. Key Stage 2 pupils are taught in three classes, each including pupils from two year groups.
- The school's long-standing accommodation problems have continued, despite the granting of planning permission for a new school. The school currently makes use of five separate buildings around the village green.
- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching upon pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - the level of challenge for pupils is consistently high, particularly in the lower part of the school
 - pupils' behaviour is managed consistently well in all lessons.
- Build upon pupils' improving achievement throughout the school, particularly for the most able, ensuring that:
 - pupils in Key Stage 1 continue to make the gains in their learning seen in Reception so that they reach higher standards, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - pupils in Key Stage 2 make more rapid progress and attain standards in mathematics and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling that are at least as high as those in reading.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The headteacher has reinvigorated the school since her appointment and expectations have risen. Although the full impact is not yet consistently evident in pupils' achievement, there have been many improvements. For example, significant improvements in leadership, including governance, and in teaching and assessment, have ensured that the school is well placed to accelerate progress further and to address the recent dip in standards.
 - The leadership of teaching is effective. Teaching is improving rapidly. Senior leaders have tackled weaker teaching in order to secure rapid improvement. Their evaluations of the quality of teaching are accurate. They draw effectively upon outside expertise to enable teachers to improve their skills.
 - Systems to manage teachers' performance are effective and rigorous. Staff understand the school's expectations. Teachers' targets are closely linked to what pupils should achieve. Subject leaders, such as the leader of special educational needs, are knowledgeable, committed and effective. The recently appointed mathematics leader has a well-judged plan to address identified weaknesses.
 - The school's self-evaluation is accurate in key respects. The improvement plan is focused on appropriate priorities. All staff understand their role in school improvement. Staff are now using information on pupils' attainment and progress more successfully to plan more challenging lessons. Consequently, pupils are beginning to make more consistently rapid progress.
 - The use of funding to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils is having a positive impact on the achievement of these pupils. Funding is appropriately focused on specific individual needs.
 - School leaders promote pupils' personal and social development effectively. This ensures that pupils are kept safe and behave well. Safeguarding requirements are met.
 - Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well prepared for the diversity of British democratic society. Close links with the parish church promote pupils' awareness of spirituality well.
 - Leaders have reviewed the structure of the subjects they provide to accommodate current changes to the New National Curriculum. The school has worked cooperatively within the local 'quad' (a small group of local schools which challenge and support each other) to ensure that what is taught engages and enthuses pupils. The school is introducing a modified assessment system to replace levels as these are phased out. Science is generally well developed across the school.
 - Activities funded through the primary school sport funding have increased pupils' participation in sports clubs and competitions. Additional staff training ensures that the changes are sustainable.
 - The school receives good support from the local authority. Parents are highly supportive of the school and of recent improvements. Productive links exist with other local schools. The school has a close relationship with Benenden School for Girls.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors have a strong commitment to the school. Following the last inspection, the governing body undertook a fundamental reorganisation, under a new chair, and has become much more efficient and effective. Governors visit the school frequently. They challenge school leaders with greater confidence, and are now more directly involved in school improvement. Governors understand how the school's performance compares with that of schools nationally. They successfully promote good relationships. They understand the strengths and weakness of teaching well. Governors ensure that pay increases and promotion properly reflect individual teachers' effectiveness. Governors are fully committed to ensuring the school promotes tolerance, provides equality of opportunity and tackles any discrimination. They closely check the impact of additional funding on gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others. They ensure, along with senior leaders, that statutory duties are met, including those for the safeguarding of pupils.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in most classes, particularly where teachers plan activities that are engaging. Occasionally, where teachers' management skills are less secure, pupils' attention drifts and learning is less effective.
- Pupils undertake duties, for example as play leaders, and contribute well to the smooth running of the school. In this tightly-knit community, pupils look out for each other and have close friendships across all age groups.
- Inappropriate behaviour and exclusions are rare. Despite the constraints of the playground, confrontations and injuries are few. Pupils behave well. They cope well with the movements between buildings. Behaviour around the school is well managed. Thorough records of any incidents are maintained. Pupils realise that their actions may affect others.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. The attendance of Gypsy/Roma pupils is higher than that of the other pupils.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school site is secure. Risk assessments are rigorous. Staff are fully checked prior to appointment. Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
- Pupils feel safe in school, confident that adults will manage any difficulties that arise.
- Road safety is a major focus since pupils have to cross a main road to reach the lunch-hall. Safe cycling is promoted well. Pupils appreciate the risks of cyber bullying. The school works hard to help pupils protect themselves from the dangers arising from internet abuse.
- Pupils know that bullying may take different forms, but feel that it is not an issue in their school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has not, over time, enabled all pupils to make consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics and writing. Tasks have not always provided sufficient challenge to accelerate the progress of all pupils, particularly the most able. As a result, the proportions attaining Level 3 or Level 5 are often slightly below average. Occasionally, teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour sufficiently well, leading to some inattention.
- More recently, however, the quality of teaching has improved as a result of intensive coaching, good training opportunities and the observation of effective teachers at work. Consequently, the rate of pupils' progress is increasing, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2.
- Teachers set an increasingly high standard for the quality of pupils' written work. Effective systems are now in place for checking and improving pupils' progress. Although there were pockets of unmarked work last year, teachers currently mark pupils' work thoroughly. They identify specific points to help pupils improve their work, particularly in writing. Pupils usually respond to the guidance teachers provide.
- Disadvantaged pupils, with well-targeted additional support, now make at least the expected progress. The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs enables these pupils to make progress similar to that of the others.
- Pupils make rapid progress where they receive a good level of challenge. Years 4 and 5 pupils were successful in their learning because of the teacher's good understanding of inference in text. Constant interaction with pupils, challenging them to contribute their ideas, significantly extended their understanding. Year 5 pupils were actively engaged in a practical science session on forces. This was successful because of pupils' enthusiasm for devising and carrying out experiments.
- Homework is well planned and contributes effectively to pupils' learning. Tasks are set, completed and marked regularly.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Standards have not kept pace with improvements in standards nationally, although still marginally above average overall at Year 6. This affected outcomes at Year 6 in 2013 and 2014. Progress over Key Stage 2 in the last two years has not been as rapid as in previous years. Standards in mathematics, an area for improvement in the last inspection, declined at both Year 2 and Year 6 in 2014.
- Standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling are marginally below the national average.
- The overall attainment of Year 2 pupils in 2014 was broadly average, other than in reading, which was above average. These pupils had entered Year 1 from Reception with skills and knowledge well above those typically found. Consequently, their progress across Key Stage 1 was not sufficiently rapid, given their positive starting points. Too few pupils attained the higher levels in any subject, particularly mathematics.
- The most able pupils do not consistently attain the higher levels. However, these pupils are increasingly being targeted to better challenge their abilities.
- Currently, pupils' work and their learning in lessons confirm that progress is accelerating. The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in the Year 1 screening check of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) was well above the national average in 2014. This reflects recent improvements in the teaching of phonics. Reading is a strength across the school. Standards are above average at Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils make consistently good progress in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive appropriate support. In general, they make progress at least as good as that of all the other pupils.
- Pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage seldom miss school and consequently achieve well. They are mostly working at levels close to, and occasionally better than, the other pupils.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were working approximately three terms ahead of the others in English and mathematics. A similar gap applied between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils nationally. In general, these pupils are making progress at least as good as the others across the school, so that the gap in attainment is narrowing rapidly.

The early years provision**is good**

- Early years provision has improved. More effective teaching of phonics, more rigorous assessment, careful targeting of the most able and more effective leadership together ensure children now make better progress.
- Most children enter Reception with skills at least in line with those typical for their age. Children's attainment on leaving Reception has varied in recent years. It was well above what was typically found in 2012, but fell considerably in 2013, partly as a result of staffing issues. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2014 was above the latest national average. In most years, therefore, children are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- The school constantly reviews the areas of learning to ensure that children are effectively challenged to achieve well, including those who have special educational needs. There is a good balance between teacher-directed and free-choice activities. The school ensures that children have frequent access to outdoor learning opportunities.
- Children show self-sufficiency when selecting resources and settling down to activities. They build positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff ensure that Reception children behave well and are safe and well looked after. Good links are established with parents, who have a positive involvement with the school.
- The staff know individual children well and the thorough checks and observations they carry out provide accurate information about children's developmental needs.

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	118597
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449266

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Lycett
Headteacher	Gill Knox
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2013
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