

St Blaise Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Milton Heights, Abingdon, OX14 4DR

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| 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' achievement, the quality of teaching and leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection. As a result St Blaise is now a good school.
- The headteacher checks on the quality of teaching effectively and provides good advice to help teachers improve.
- The governing body questions the headteacher thoroughly about the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers typically plan activities well to meet the different abilities and ages of pupils taught in the same classes.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well and give good guidance to pupils about how to improve their work.
- Overall, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teaching in the early years provision is good. Children make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are normally polite to each other and staff.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is very little bullying.
- The school works well to help pupils keep themselves safe. For example, pupils have talks from the local police about how to stay safe if they are playing outdoors.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils do not progress as fast in mathematics in Key Stage 2 as they do in reading and writing.
- The questions that teachers ask sometimes do not fully extend pupils' thinking and vocabulary.
- Middle leaders do not consistently observe the quality of teaching in different subjects to give advice to teachers on how to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector examined learning in seven lessons and observed four teachers. The inspector and headteacher visited two lessons together.
- A range of documents were examined including school assessments of pupils' progress; senior leaders judgements about the quality of teaching; minutes of governing body meetings; local authority reports about the school; and policies to safeguard pupils.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and teachers, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils.
- The inspector took into account 18 responses from parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire on the Ofsted website.
- The inspector also took into account the 15 Ofsted questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

James Henry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Blaise is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- There are three classes in the school. Reception children and Year 1 are taught in one class. Years 2 and 3 are taught in another and Years 4, 5, and 6 are taught in the third class. Children in Reception attend full time.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- About one in 10 pupils are disadvantaged and known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. This is extra funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children in local authority care. However, there were very few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school offers before-school childcare provision. This is not managed by the governing body and was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be outstanding by ensuring that:
 - learning activities consistently challenge the most able
 - questioning fully extends pupils' vocabulary and thinking
 - middle leaders observe the quality of teaching in different subjects and provide advice to staff in how to improve pupils' learning.
- Increase the rate at which the most-able pupils learn in mathematics across Key Stage 2 by:
 - improving pupils' problem-solving skills
 - improving pupils' use of mathematical language so that they can explain their thinking and ideas more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher accurately checks on the quality of teaching. She gives good guidance to staff in how to improve their lessons. As a result, the quality of teaching is now good with all groups of pupils making good progress. The quality of marking is much improved.
- Leaders carefully check on pupils' progress through accurate assessments. The headteacher makes good use of this information to manage the performance of staff and question them about the progress of the pupils they teach.
- The headteacher ensures there is good professional training for staff.
- Action plans to improve the school are clear. They are based on leaders' and governors' accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Some lessons are observed by subject leaders and they have a good understanding of pupils' progress in their particular area. However, this practice is not followed consistently. Subject leaders do not play a big enough role in checking on the quality of teaching and providing advice to staff about how to improve pupils' learning. There is too much reliance on the headteacher alone to undertake this role.
- Additional funding from the pupil premium has been used to pay for outside agencies to help pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. This support has helped pupils to participate better in lessons and make better progress. Assessments show that across the school the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is closing.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. All staff receive regular child protection training. There are robust procedures to safeguard pupils, especially in checking that staff are suitable to work with children.
- Pupils are taught a wide variety of subjects that are often linked together. The school uses the local area to arrange visits that interest and excite pupils. For example, during the inspection, Years 4, 5 and 6 visited Oxford to look at the architecture of different buildings. This type of approach fosters pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of learning.
- Different themes such as 'People Who Help Us' and topics based on 'fairtrade' help develop pupils' moral and social values.
- The school has strong links with the local church and the vicar regularly takes assemblies. Pupils visit other places of prayer, such as the local synagogue and mosque, to broaden their understanding and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. This all helps to foster pupils' spiritual and cultural development and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The school organises a 'pupil parliament' where pupils discuss ideas about how to improve the school. This gives pupils an appreciation of the importance of listening to others. Visits from the local Member of Parliament and local councillors develop pupils' understanding of how decisions are reached in a democracy and the importance of obeying the law.
- The school promotes good relationships in the local and wider community. Pupils are involved in local and national charities. Together with the local football club they raise funds for national charities such as Children in Need.
- Additional funding to develop sport is used well. Sports coaches are employed to organise games and activities such as gymnastics and dance. They work with staff to help share expertise. School records show that this has increased the involvement and enjoyment of pupils in sport. More pupils enter different competitions. The school has a long-term plan to measure the difference this is making to pupils' health and well-being. So far, pupils have taken an initial fitness test.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school since the previous inspection. This has included providing expertise in teaching writing. They also checked that teachers accurately assess pupils' attainment and progress. As the school has improved, the level of support has been reduced and the school now requests help when required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors question effectively the headteacher about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They understand how well different groups of pupils in the school are doing compared with all pupils nationally. This includes disadvantaged pupils. This information is used by governors to decide how to spend the additional funding to ensure this group of pupils make good progress. Performance management systems are effective in ensuring good teaching is recognised and any poor performance is identified and addressed. Safeguarding procedures are regularly checked to help make sure pupils are safe in school.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are normally polite and respectful to one another and staff. They respond well when corrected.
- Relationships are good. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well, especially pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Pupils say that behaviour is typically good around the school, in the dinner hall and at playtimes. They also say that there are occasions when pupils fall out and argue but this is dealt with effectively by staff.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website felt that the school makes sure pupils are well behaved.
- Observations in lessons and pupils' work in their books show that they are keen to learn. Attendance is above the national average. Pupils have great regard for their school. When asked what they would change about their school, they replied 'absolutely nothing'.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The school organises talks from the local police and fire brigade about staying safe when playing outside and the dangers of fire.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe when using different devices that have access to the internet. Staff are trained in 'e-safety'. There is an 'e-safety' day each term to which parents are invited.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there is very little bullying of any kind.
- Attendance is above the national average.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Assessments measuring pupils' progress and observations of pupils learning and their work show that teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.
- Teachers typically plan activities well for the different ability groups and ages in their classes. This helps ensure different groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching assistants support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs well in class. They help these pupils understand and answer teachers' questions and assist them in completing tasks. This shows that the school is committed to all pupils having an equal opportunity to learn and none is discriminated against.
- Pupils' work is marked well. Pupils understand the system that teachers use and regularly respond to comments from the teacher to improve their work. This is a strength of teaching across the school.
- Pupils are taught to read well. The school has a consistent approach to ensuring pupils use their phonic skills (the sounds that letters make) to sound out any unfamiliar words.
- Teachers consistently share with pupils what they are expected to learn. Pupils appreciate this because they say it helps them to have a clear idea if they have been successful in their work.
- There are occasions when tasks do not challenge the most-able pupils. For example, pupils were given a task of working out the time to the nearest hour, saying for example '3 o'clock'. When asked, they understood this quickly and could also say half past the hour quite easily.
- Sometimes teachers' questioning of pupils does not extend their thinking and their use of vocabulary. At times pupils are able to give 'yes' or 'no' answers to questions and are therefore not expected to give more detailed answers and explain their thinking.
- In mathematics, teachers do not consistently challenge the most-able pupils in their problem-solving skills or develop their use of mathematical language to explain their thinking.
- Most parents who completed the Parent View survey felt that their child was well taught at the school.

The achievement of pupils**is good**

- Accurate school assessments show that pupils currently in the school are making good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because teachers use assessments to plan activities that match their different abilities.
- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to compare their attainment with that of non

free school meal pupils nationally or other groups of pupils in the school. Across other year groups, disadvantaged pupils are making similar and sometimes better progress compared to other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. School assessments from last year show that disadvantaged pupils across Key Stage 2 were approximately a term behind other pupils in mathematics, at least a term ahead in reading and at a broadly similar level in writing.

- The most-able pupils make good progress overall, especially in reading and writing. However, progress for some of the most-able pupils slows in mathematics across Key Stage 2. Pupils' problem solving skills are not consistently improved. Their use of mathematical language is not developed enough so that they can explain their thinking.
- Data showing pupils' progress and results from national tests vary from year to year due to the very small numbers of pupils in Years 2 and 6. Overall, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is slightly above the national average.
- School assessments and the standards in pupils' work show that the attainment and progress of pupils currently in the school is rising.

The early years provision

is good

- The skills of the small number of children who enter the Early Years Foundation Stage vary. However, they are often below those typical for their age, especially in their communication and language skills.
- Children make good progress in their learning and achieve well. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development is broadly in line with the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staff know individual children well. They use assessments based on regular observations of children to plan activities that help them move on in their learning.
- Children behave well. They share equipment, such as pencils and toys, and are generally polite and cooperate with each other and staff.
- There are good relationships between staff and parents. Staff care for the well-being of children well.
- Safeguarding meets requirements. Children feel safe. Staff help children keep themselves safe, for example by showing them how to use scissors properly and how to stay safe when in the outdoor area.
- Children enjoy learning and develop a good level of self-confidence. For example, they were making 'stick dinosaurs' and using pulleys to lift different designs they had made.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders promote the different aspects of children's development well. They check children's progress carefully.
- There are good links with the pre-school setting. As a result leaders in the early years know individual children before they come to the provision. This helps children settle quickly and provides continuity to their education.

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 | 123178 |
| Local authority | Oxfordshire |
| Inspection number | 450861 |

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 | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 55 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Kevin Moyes |
| Headteacher | Ruth Leach |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16 January 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01235 831368 |
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