

Holy Cross Church of England Primary School

Belmont Road, Uckfield, TN22 1BP

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders and managers have not secured improvement in some areas for which they are responsible.
- The leadership of special educational needs provision is inconsistent.
- Teaching over time has not been strong enough to secure good achievement in all years and in all subjects.
- Teachers do not always correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, so that pupils can avoid repeating them.
- Achievement at Key Stage 2, especially in writing and mathematics, does not yet match national standards.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving rapidly; consequently, pupils' progress is rising steadily, especially in mathematics.
- The school's system for checking and tracking pupils' progress is thorough and accurate, enabling teachers to plan for pupils' needs.
- Leaders and governors have managed a difficult period of transition well, so that pupils' progress has not been affected.
- Achievement in the early years and Key Stage 1 has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good.
- Behaviour has improved strongly since the last inspection and is now securely good. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure.
- Pupils, parents and staff like the school and appreciate its strong sense of community.

Information about this inspection

- Eight lessons and parts of lessons were observed, one jointly with the acting deputy headteacher. Pupils were also seen working in small groups and individually with teachers and teaching assistants.
- The responses of 19 parents to the Parent View on-line questionnaire were reviewed and the inspector spoke informally to parents. The responses of 15 staff to the Ofsted questionnaire were also taken into account.
- The inspector spoke to a group of pupils who talked about their work and progress. Pupils from Years 2 and 6 read to the inspector and talked about their reading.
- Pupils' work was examined in lessons and through a work scrutiny undertaken jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with governors, a local authority representative, subject leaders, senior staff, a group of teachers and teaching assistants.
- Records of attendance, exclusions and behaviour were examined. Pupils' progress information was analysed. School self-evaluation and action plans and governors' minutes were reviewed.

Inspection team

John Worgan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been significant changes in management in the last year. The school is currently managed by an interim headteacher, with the support of an acting deputy headteacher.
- Pupils in Years 1,2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are taught in mixed age classes. The early years provision consists of one full-time Reception class.
- A privately run nursery on site is not managed by the school and will be inspected separately.
- The proportion of pupils receiving pupil premium funding is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and those children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor targets which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the management of provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is secure
 - ensuring that changes in leadership have a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Improve teaching by:
 - sharing good practice so that more teaching becomes good or better
 - correcting pupils' work so that pupils are aware of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar and avoid repeating them.
- Improve achievement in literacy by:
 - giving pupils the opportunity to write extensively in all subjects, with guidance, so that the quality of their writing improves.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The acting deputy headteacher and the interim headteacher have worked effectively to ensure that changes in the leadership of the school have had minimal impact on pupils and their progress. Parents, governors and the local authority spoke highly of the way in which the leadership and staff have worked together during a period of uncertainty.
 - There are aspects of the school's work which are not managed effectively. This includes the leadership of special educational needs provision, where several temporary appointments have made it difficult to ensure continuity. It is to the credit of the higher level teaching assistants working with these pupils that good support on a day-to-day basis has been maintained.
 - Teachers' performance and progression up the pay scales are evaluated in terms of pupils' progress and quality of teaching. Checks on teaching are thorough and supportive and have resulted in the elimination of poor teaching.
 - There has been poor teaching in the past. This is reflected in the standards of achievement of some older pupils who have not yet reached the levels of achievement of which they are capable. The acting deputy headteacher and the interim headteacher are determined that recent improvements in teaching will be sustained and this is already improving pupils' progress.
 - Middle leaders vary in their effectiveness. Changes in the senior leadership have resulted in a re-allocation of subject leadership. Subject leaders have introduced initiatives to improve teaching in mathematics and to improve the quality of pupils' writing. The effect of these programmes is reflected in improvements in pupils' progress, but is yet to be seen in results at the end of Year 6.
 - Behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers have high expectations and have worked hard to ensure consistent standards and to support pupils with difficulty in managing their behaviour.
 - Leaders are able to give a full account of how pupil premium funding has been spent to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils. School information shows that the gap between these pupils' progress has now been closed and in some year groups and subjects, pupil premium pupils are outperforming others.
 - The curriculum is broad and balanced and is well planned. The school has incorporated the new National Curriculum in its planning and careful mapping ensures that pupils in mixed age classes do not repeat work. Good planning ensures that pupils are well informed about democracy and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
 - In response to parents' requests, the range of extra-curricular activities has been extended, with some activities supported through sport premium funding. This funding is well managed and also supports coaching for pupils and staff and the purchase of new equipment for physical education.
 - Leaders are committed to equality of opportunity and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Although the school has a strong Christian ethos, pupils are encouraged to understand and to respect others' views and beliefs.
 - Since the last inspection, the local authority has provided significant support for the school, focused on senior and middle leadership. As the school is currently without a permanent headteacher, and is likely to remain so for some time, the local authority will continue to provide this level of support.
 - Parents are supportive of the school and spoke highly of the way in which the acting deputy headteacher and the staff have managed the school in recent months. A significant number of parents expressed concern about the long term future of the school, which is being reviewed by the governors and the local authority.
 - Safeguarding and the safer recruitment of staff meet current statutory requirements. Staff are well trained in safety matters and policies are in place to ensure that all pupils, including those who are vulnerable, are well cared for.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body is in the process of re-organisation. All areas of skill are covered and the governors have expertise which supports the school well.
 - Governors have managed a difficult staffing situation, including the departure of the headteacher, sensitively and professionally. They have a clear oversight of the process for setting targets for staff.
 - Governors play a full part in the school's self-evaluation. They have a clear understanding of the targets which the school has set for pupils' attainment and the statistics which underpin them.

- Governors understand standards of teaching and check the school’s monitoring to ensure that they are sustained. They are aware of how additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for physical education is used and check its allocation diligently.
- Parents’ views are regularly canvassed through questionnaires and informal contacts. These views inform governors’ policies and plans.
- Governors are well aware of safeguarding requirements and procedures. Governors are trained in safer recruitment and monitor the implementation of policies carefully.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and considerate to each other and to adults. In discussion, parents said that behaviour in the school has improved. The majority of parents who completed the on-line Parent View questionnaire agree, although a small minority still feel that behaviour in the school is a problem.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and staff have worked hard to improve behaviour. The behaviour policy is comprehensive and well understood and is implemented consistently by all staff. The higher levels of sanction are seldom used.
- Staff are trained in behaviour management. From the time when pupils enter the school, good behaviour is expected and encouraged. Pupils who have behavioural difficulties are well supported so that they can learn and make progress.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. In some classes, outstanding behaviour enables pupils to cooperate and to support each other’s learning. Occasionally, when pupils are given tasks which do not interest them or extend their skills, their attention wanders and they lose concentration. In meetings, pupils reported that it is rare for their lessons to be disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Pupils behave sensibly and responsibly at break and lunchtimes. Supervisors insist on good behaviour and, in the dining hall, pupils are expected to have good table manners and to tidy away after eating.
- Older pupils act as play leaders, taking their responsibilities seriously and acting as good role models.
- Attendance has improved and now matches the national expectations for primary schools.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. A recent audit by the local authority confirmed that policies and procedures are robust.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and are confident that any concerns which they have will be dealt with promptly and sympathetically. Parents expressed no concerns about pupils’ safety.
- Staff follow the school’s policy when raising concerns about pupils. The school’s records of referrals to the local authority are kept securely and updated regularly.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare and that when it does occur it is dealt with effectively. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying and how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because poor teaching over time has prevented pupils from achieving as well as they might in mathematics and writing.
- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and leaders have worked hard to support teachers in improving their practice. As a result, pupils’ progress is beginning to improve.
- Writing skills are improving, but not yet rapidly enough to match national standards. The school is aware of this and is putting in place initiatives to improve writing, especially for boys.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is strong. In the Year 1 phonic check, pupils’ scores were above the national average. The investment which the school makes in teaching children effectively in the early years is one reason why the reading skills of older pupils are good.
- Pupils read well and enjoy reading. All pupils keep reading records which show that they read widely; parents read regularly with their children. Pupils who have difficulty with reading have extra help from trained staff.
- Results in mathematics in 2014 were below the national average. The school identified weaker teaching as the main reason for this and has taken positive action, including reviewing programmes of study and

training for staff, in order to secure improvement in this area.

- Standards of marking vary considerably. The best marking guides pupils on the specific steps which they need to take to improve their learning. Where marking is weaker it consists mainly of general comments. Teachers often indicate where pupils have made a spelling or grammatical error but do not correct the error or require pupils to make corrections; consequently, these errors are repeated.
- Homework is set regularly. Reading records show that most pupils read daily.
- Teaching assistants play a key role in helping pupils to make good progress. In lessons, support from teaching assistants is of high quality and the inspector saw several examples of pupils benefiting from group work led by teaching assistants.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because standards in mathematics and writing at Key Stage 2, although improving, have not yet reached national levels.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with attainment which matches the national average. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 have been consistently good in recent years and remain so. The good start which children make in the Reception class enables them to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Test results in Key Stage 2 have been below the national average in the last three years because of weakness in mathematics and writing. Reading scores have improved and are above the national figure.
- The school's information shows that most pupils are now making good progress in all areas because teaching has improved. Data for pupils' achievement in different year groups show some variability, mainly because some classes have experienced poorer teaching in the past.
- The most able pupils are making good progress. School information for Year 6 pupils shows that an increasing proportion of them are reaching the higher levels. The work seen during the inspection confirms this.
- In reading, achievement is good. In the Year 1 phonic check, results are well above national standards. Performance in reading assessments in Year 2 and Year 6 also exceed national averages.
- Standards of writing are below the national average. The school is aware of this as an area requiring improvement and standards have begun to improve. The standard of boys' writing still lags behind that of girls, however.
- Although mathematics results improved from 2013 to 2014, they do not yet match national standards. Initiatives to improve mathematics teaching are beginning to secure improvement and school data and pupils' work confirm that progress is moving upward.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in mathematics and writing was about one year; in reading, disadvantaged pupils outperformed their peers. School progress data show that this gap has been reduced or reversed in all year groups due to carefully targeted support. The funding allocated to these pupils has been used effectively, principally to provide them with specialist support and teaching. The funding ensures that these pupils have the full range of experiences available to other pupils, including trips and visits.
- There are no significant differences in achievement between different groups of pupils. This is because staff check the performance of individuals and groups carefully, using the school's tracking system, acting swiftly if they are falling behind.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making slower progress than others overall. In Years 4 and 6, however, they are making better progress due to well-targeted support from teachers and teaching assistants. The management of this area has seen a number of changes, but effective work by higher level teaching assistants has ensured that pupils are well supported.

The early years provision

is good

- On entering the Reception class, children's knowledge and skills are typical for their age. Through good teaching and careful guidance children make good progress and by the end of the Reception year are ready to move on confidently to the next stage of their education.
- Reading and writing are developed well through a range of activities. During the inspection, children sang a song incorporating 'th' sounds, then practised forming the letters, so that by the end of the session they had written a sentence, 'this is a moth', demonstrating good progress.
- The Reception classroom and adjoining outside area are spacious and well planned, allowing pupils to choose activities and to work effectively in groups, pairs or individually.

- Excellent relationships between children and adults ensure that they feel safe and secure. Expectations of good behaviour and clear routines ensure that children behave well and respect each other. Teaching assistants play a key role in ensuring that the needs of children of different abilities and skills are met.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. The acting deputy headteacher works effectively with the class teacher in planning and ensuring that checks on children’s progress are thorough and accurate. The class teacher and teaching assistants work very effectively as a team, using their different skills well.
- Parents are fully involved in their children’s education. They read with them regularly and speak highly of their children’s experience of school and of the information which they receive on their progress.

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	114562
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	453692

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	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Blanch
Headteacher	Steve Hempson-Jones
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 January 2013
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