

Benson Church of England Primary School

Oxford Road, Wallingford, OX10 6LX

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2015

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.

- The school is very well led by the headteacher. With good support from governors and other leaders, she has successfully improved teaching so that all groups of pupils now achieve well.
- Governors are highly skilled and very involved in the school. They know its strengths and what it needs to improve further.
- Pupils benefit from a rich and creative variety of subjects. This interests them and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers and other adults at the school. They enjoy their learning, try hard and behave well.
- Parents are confident that the school keeps their children safe and ensures they make good progress.
- Teachers know the pupils well. They are skilful in planning activities in lessons which engage and challenge all groups of pupils.
- Good provision in the early years means that children progress well, with most now reaching a good level of development.
- Pupils in all year groups are making good progress. Many pupils in the current Year 6 are already working at or above the levels expected by the end of the year.
- Highly effective provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs means they make often exceptional progress from their individual starting points.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' expectations of work in some non-core subjects are not as high as in mathematics and English.
- Pupils do not always receive useful feedback showing how to improve their work in subjects other than mathematics and English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons. Some observations were shared with the headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard some pupils read and looked at samples of work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records of pupils' behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress, anonymised records of teachers' performance and records of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils and teachers and spoke to parents. A meeting was held with five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the 50 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Inspectors considered the written comments from 17 members of staff.

Inspection team

Tim McLoughlin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Wynford-Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below average. This provides additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Children in the Reception class are taught full time.
- About one third of pupils are from families with a parent or carer serving in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Some subject leaders are new in post since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers consistently demonstrate high expectations of pupils to produce work of good quality in all subjects, as already is the case in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers' marking always shows pupils how to improve their work in all subjects as well as that done in core subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The ethos of the school is very caring, with the needs of the pupils at its heart. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, consistently so in English and mathematics, and there is a collective understanding that pupils should support one another to do as well as they can. Pupils know that good behaviour is required and that they should try hard in their lessons. The success of school leaders in managing a good balance between personal and academic development indicates a strong capacity for further improvement.
- Subject leaders, some of whom are relatively new in post, already have a clear sense of purpose in supporting colleagues to raise standards. They attend training to keep up to date with initiatives. This includes an innovative approach to improve the standards of writing across all subjects.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher keep a sharp eye on the quality of teaching, looking particularly at how successfully teachers ensure their pupils make good progress. They observe lessons, analyse assessment information and look at pupils' workbooks to check that individuals or groups are not falling behind. The training and development of individual teachers are kept up to date and relates closely to the regular checks on the quality of their work.
- Senior leaders are well aware of the historic difference in the performance of boys and girls in writing and have successfully tackled this so that boys are doing better.
- The school is committed to ensuring equal opportunities and has a growing reputation for its inclusive approach. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Good relations are successfully promoted between the school and the local community, for example with a recent event to mark the centenary of the First World War.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils through a range of activities. For example, a designated member of the teaching staff provides individual tutoring across English and mathematics. This not only ensures they make good progress but also enhances their well-being.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is spent wisely. Specialist coaches are employed both to lead clubs and to pass on their expertise to school staff. Pupils take advantage of the wider options available. As a result, more than one in 10 pupils takes up the offer of at least one extra-curricular sporting club.
- Pupils benefit from a rich and creative variety of subjects that supports their academic progress and personal development. The school makes very good provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the context of the Christian ethos that the school clearly articulates. Work in pupils' books shows that they gain experience of an appropriate range of subjects, including history, computing, science and geography. However, although good, the feedback which pupils receive in these areas is not as detailed or helpful as it is in English and mathematics.
- Pupils gain an understanding of British values through activities such as the school's 'Green Rangers' supporting economic use of precious resources and 'Digital Leaders' promoting responsible use of communication technology. They also take part in school elections for the school council. They are taught to be tolerant and respectful and to challenge discrimination, and they leave the school well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school works well with the local authority. It has provided a wide range of helpful support including managing teachers' performance and arranging specialist consultants to work alongside school staff.
- The school takes care to ensure that it has effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils and children in the early years. All statutory requirements are met. For example, meticulous attention is given to checking the suitability of all employees.
- **The governance of the school:**
Governors have an excellent grasp of their roles and responsibilities. They are adept at analysing and interpreting assessment data. This enables them to check pupils' progress and ask insightful questions. They support the headteacher and offer challenge where they feel that the school needs to improve, including in tackling underperformance. Governors have specific responsibilities and visit the school very regularly to gain secure, first-hand information. They keep a close eye on the management of teachers' performance, make sure that teachers are accountable for pupils' progress and ensure good teaching is rewarded when salaries are reviewed. Together with the headteacher, governors communicate their aspirations for the school, staff and the wider community. They manage the finances well and seek assurance that additional funding, for example for disadvantaged pupils and for sports, is well used.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and keen to please. Their prompt responses, mature approach to working in groups and pairs, and ability to work independently enhance their learning and contribute to their progress.
- Excellent relationships with staff and pupils underpin the positive attitudes seen in all lessons. Pupils show respect for others and are helpful and polite to visitors, staff and their classmates.
- Rewards and sanctions are consistently carried out by all staff. Pupils say the system of rewards, staff encouragement and posters reminding them of the school's code of conduct help them to try hard to do their best. Parents are highly positive about their children's behaviour.
- Effective pastoral care features close links with external agencies and sensitive support for pupils at risk of falling behind. Consequently, all pupils are helped to achieve their full potential and make a positive contribution to life at the school.
- Pupils' attendance has been above average since the last inspection, which is an indication of its popularity.
- Occasionally, pupils' engagement flags when they are unsure of what is expected of them in some lessons, which is why behaviour is not outstanding.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe.
- Bullying is not considered an issue by the pupils and the school actively promotes positive messages about how to tackle and respond to several types of bullying, including name-calling and teasing.
- Pupils are well aware of the need to be cautious when using modern communication technology. They are alert to cyber-bullying for example and understand the need to keep personal information secure.
- Parents responding to the Parent View online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the way the school ensures their children's safety. This was endorsed by all of those spoken to during the inspection.
- School leaders have ensured that all members of staff are trained in child protection procedures.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils show very positive, mature attitudes and sustain their concentration because they mirror the teachers' enthusiasm for learning and rise to the challenges they are set. For example, in a Year 1 lesson about the Great Fire of London, a pupil was able to write, 'I looked out of my window and saw a crackling fire, people were terrified and screaming loudly. I smelled burning houses.' In this lesson, pupils worked hard to include accurate punctuation and spelling, and chose to use ambitious words.
- Good learning in literacy and numeracy is promoted successfully. Prompted by teachers, pupils try their best, with most making good efforts to present their work neatly, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations of the quality of work they expect from pupils in mathematics and English. This is slightly less obvious in other subjects where sometimes teachers' marking is not as helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work.
- Teachers use questioning very skilfully to keep pupils alert and sustain their interest. They set work that builds on pupils' previous knowledge so that they do not repeat themselves or find the work too demanding.
- Learning is rapid when teachers carefully check on pupils' understanding during lessons and adapt their planning as necessary. Reading is well taught throughout the school. The school has placed a love of reading high on its list of priorities and has created an inviting library area. Pupils read a rich variety of books, which keeps them enthused.
- Teaching in mathematics and English is good because teachers make the lessons challenging for pupils. For example literacy skills were used well when pupils were learning about the main events and characters leading up to a historical battle in Greece. The teacher's careful planning ensured work was pitched at the right level for each group and the use of a drama helped bring the lesson to life. As a result, all the pupils achieved success.
- Parents speak very positively about teaching, saying that the teachers know their children very well, and they have nothing but praise for the quality of teaching now at the school.
- Teachers manage their classes well. No time is wasted. Teachers make good use of various approaches to

show pupils how to do their best work, for example by telling them what a good piece of work will look like. Pupils who need extra help are taught well through an effective mix of individual and class support. Adults who work closely with these pupils make an important contribution to their good learning.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection because teaching is more effective. Pupils are making good progress and attain slightly above average results in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding as learning and progress in non-core subjects does not yet match that made in mathematics and English.
- Current pupils are making good progress and the standard of their work in Years 2 and 6 is above average. School data indicates that pupils are on course to exceed the results seen last year at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the way letters link to the sounds they make (phonics) because this early reading skill is taught well. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 national screening check is well above the national average.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 work hard to improve their reading, writing and mathematical skills. The pitch of lessons is high and this means pupils have to work hard and pay close attention to learning. For instance, Year 4 pupils were learning how to create an effective performance based on a chapter from *'The Jungle Book'*. Because of strengths in classroom management and the teacher's engaging manner, the pupils achieved a high standard of work in an enjoyable lesson.
- The most able pupils benefit from demanding work and challenging topic homework. Many are adept at stretching their own capabilities through extended pieces of project work similar to that used in secondary schools so that they are both learning and developing skills of self-organisation.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, particularly in learning to read and to express themselves, as a result of the targeted support. This means that the education they receive meets their needs.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to provide extra support for their learning. For example, it is used to fund individual support to increase pupils' self-esteem and provide access to extra-curricular activities. As a result, eligible pupils make the same good progress as their classmates with no discernible gap in attainment, including when compared with other pupils nationally.

The early years provision is good

- When children join the school in the early years, their skills and knowledge are generally below those typical for their age. Though different year groups vary, writing skills are a relative weakness. The activities and support provided from the adults help them make a good start to their learning and, as a result, they make good progress.
- Children get off to a good start in learning and are well prepared for Year 1 because of the strong relationships they form with the adults working with them. The children are enthusiastic and work well together, clearly enjoying the activities which take place both indoors and outside.
- Children are given many opportunities to learn what good behaviour looks like and how to play with one another cooperatively. This means that they are considerate and behave well.
- Teaching in the Reception class is good. Teachers take into account children's interests. For example, in a mixed session, one group of children had chosen to paint using poster paint to develop their dexterity while another group of children was being supported to undertake close observational drawings of fruit.
- The early years staff have developed effective partnerships with parents. Parents are welcomed into class at the start of each day and are very positive about the transition arrangements for the children. Parents were unanimous in their praise and say that their children 'love it here, it's great'.
- Teachers make good use of information from assessments. They have a very detailed knowledge of each child's development which they use to plan carefully what they will learn next.
- The classroom is spacious, well used and well resourced. The headteacher and key stage leader have identified how learning can be improved in the outdoor areas and have installed additional reading and writing resources.
- Leadership and management of the early years provision are good and have led to improvements in

teaching, and subsequently, children's achievement, over the past two years. Staff successfully ensure that children can learn in a safe, interesting environment.

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	123125
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	453543
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	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Wood
Headteacher	Helen Crolla
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2013
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