

Pells Church of England Primary School

Landport Road, Lewes, BN7 2SU

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2015

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

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good across the school.
- The tasks set by teachers are not always demanding enough to help pupils to make good progress. Staff do not always check pupils' learning frequently enough in lessons.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics have been below the national average over a sustained period.
- Progress in mathematics is not as strong as it is in reading and writing. Pupils are not always encouraged to explain how they are carrying out calculations and solving problems.
- The progress of groups of pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, is not consistently good.
- Older pupils in mixed age classes are not always given work that is challenging enough.
- Not all pupils are able to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's good leadership is resulting in improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body support and challenge leaders well and carefully manage the school's resources.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and the school takes effective steps to make sure that all pupils are safe and happy.
- Children get off to a good start to their learning in the Reception class.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 improved to be in line with the national average in 2014.
- Teachers' marking now gives pupils clear feedback on what to improve and pupils respond to this regularly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all four classes. He also made a number of shorter visits to each class and the 'nurture room' to look at behaviour and the quality of learning taking place. About half of these visits to classrooms were conducted with the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, three governors, a representative from the local authority and three other school leaders during the inspection.
- The inspector held a formal discussion with a group of Key Stage 2 pupils about many aspects of the school's work. He also spoke to pupils around the school over the two days to gain their views. He heard some pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Documents relating to safeguarding, school improvement, achievement, attendance, governance, teacher performance and pay progression were scrutinised.
- The inspector considered the 13 responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey and also talked to some parents on the playground before school.
- The inspector looked at the 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll is falling.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils entitled to free school meals and those who are looked after) is more than double the national average.
- Approximately one quarter of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs. This proportion is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There are four classes. Provision in the early years (Reception class) is full time.
- Four of the six teachers have joined the school within the last two years.
- Each year group has a small number of pupils and this can make comparisons to national averages unreliable.
- As well as moving on to the local secondary schools a proportion of pupils transfer to specialist provision when they leave the school at the end of Year 6.
- The school is part of the Education Improvement Partnership in Lewes and the Havens, and a member of the Lewes Co-operative Learning Trust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in writing by focusing on the development of accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, ensuring that there is clear progression in these skills through the school.
- Improve achievement in mathematics by ensuring that pupils are given more opportunities to explain their reasoning both orally and in writing when carrying out calculations and solving problems.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring the best practice within the school is shared among staff and implemented consistently
 - ensuring that tasks are set at the right level of difficulty, especially for the most able and for older pupils in mixed year classes
 - ensuring those eligible for additional funding make the same progress as other pupils
 - checking the progress that pupils make in lessons and moving them on to more challenging work as necessary.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has continued to drive improvements within the school. She is now working successfully to raise standards further with a new team of teachers who are benefiting from her expertise and experience. As a result of her determined leadership, achievement in the early years provision and at the end of Key Stage 2 improved in 2014.
- Parents are positive about the school, with one describing it as 'a well kept secret that is improving' and another explaining that there is 'a really wonderful headteacher who makes the school run beautifully'.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how the school makes sure there are opportunities for everyone to succeed, are encouraged to foster good relationships and explained in their own words that discrimination of any kind was not tolerated.
- School leaders have put in place robust systems to monitor the quality of teaching and the performance of teachers. These systems have led to improvements in the quality of teaching and are now being used with newer staff. Staff benefit from ample professional development opportunities including coaching to improve their teaching. However, leaders recognise that there is scope for staff to improve their teaching by sharing the best practice that exists in the school.
- The deputy headteacher has led improvements in writing in the school well; however, with some new staff these initiatives are not yet fully embedded in all classes. Middle leaders are successfully helping to drive improvements; for example, the new leader for mathematics has an accurate view of what needs to be done to improve the progress of pupils in this key subject area.
- The inclusion manager ensures that there is good provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; this includes the successful use of the nurture room. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress of these pupils, which is improving.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils, who receive additional funding through the pupil premium, is led and managed well by the inclusion manager. The funding is now being used well to support these pupils, many of whom receive targeted help from a qualified teacher to help them to close gaps in attainment. However, it is too early to see the full impact of this work.
- The curriculum is good and provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to apply their literacy skills in other subject areas. Pupils benefit from trips to places of interest and appreciate the links with the local church. The 'forest school' programme is enjoyed by pupils, as is the opportunity to learn Spanish. The school is developing its work on promoting British values well. Work on tolerance and respect and a planned trip to the Houses of Parliament to give pupils an understanding of democracy are supporting this. Overall, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils and parents value the extra sports coaching and clubs that have been provided using the primary sports grant. The funding has been used effectively and has also allowed teachers to improve their skills in teaching physical education by working closely with a specialist teacher.
- The school's safeguarding procedures are effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has continued to support the school with the improvements it is making. Consultants have provided specialist support, for example in the early years, which has helped leaders to make rapid improvements in outcomes.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing when judged against its previous performance and against national benchmarks. They use the data available to them to hold leaders to account for improvements in achievement while being supportive of the hard work carried out by teaching staff. They are aware of the quality of teaching in the school; they know that good teachers are rewarded through pay progression and have a secure understanding of how underperformance is tackled. They recognise that they need to be better informed about the successful steps the school is taking to promote British values.
 - The governing body ensures that the school's financial resources are managed well. It checks that pupil premium funding is used correctly to close gaps in achievement and is pleased with the impact that the primary sports grant has had on the sporting opportunities the school can offer. Governors are fully aware of the challenges the school faces with a falling roll and have investigated different options to maintain and continue the improvements that are being made into the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils and staff agree that the daily reward time has led to improved behaviour. Pupils behave well during assembly, in the playground at playtime, and in the dining hall at lunchtime. During a wet lunchtime pupils were engaged in sensible activities in mixed age groups in three different bases and older pupils were seen to care for their younger peers.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. In lessons they respond well to instructions and work well together in groups or in discussions with partners. The vast majority of pupils take pride in their work and know what is expected of them.
- Older pupils enjoy their roles and responsibilities around the school such as being play leaders who organise games for other pupils at break times.
- There are a few pupils who find managing their behaviour difficult; however, school records show that their behaviour is improving. The development of a nurture programme has allowed these pupils to receive dedicated support and has eradicated the school's use of exclusion since the last inspection.
- Attendance improved in 2014 but remained below the national average; however, persistent absence was nearly eliminated. The school has robust systems in place to track attendance and is working hard with a number of families to ensure that absence rates continue to fall.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Every parent that completed the Parent View survey felt that their child was safe at school. They are right to be confident as the school has good systems in place to ensure pupils know how to stay safe in school, outside school and online.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying but report that it is rare. They are confident that staff will deal well with any incidents that might occur. When problems with friendships have been shared with the headteacher these have been rigorously followed up using a 'Happy Day' book, which helps to resolve any such issues.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good and as a result, not all groups of pupils achieve well in Key Stages 1 and 2. As a result, pupils' skills in literacy, reading and mathematics are not good enough.
- There have been recent improvements in the quality of teaching and the headteacher is continuing the drive for good quality teaching by setting high expectations for staff. Newer staff are improving their skills to meet the needs of the pupils they teach.
- Work is not always set at the right level of difficulty for pupils. For example, when given a choice, more able pupils sometimes choose work that is too easy. This is not followed up quickly enough by teachers which means that these pupils make limited progress.
- Sometimes teachers set work for the whole class that is not demanding enough. Although tasks may be suitable for some of the younger pupils in mixed age classes, work is not challenging enough for the older pupils and this slows their progress. Similarly, the most able pupils are not always challenged. Teachers do not always make frequent checks on pupils' learning during lessons so that they can be moved on to new tasks as appropriate.
- Feedback and marking have improved since the previous inspection. Work is marked regularly and pupils are now beginning to respond to the marking, carrying out any corrections or answering questions.
- Staff do not pay enough attention to developing pupils' correct use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. For example, some of the best writing displayed throughout the school is poorly punctuated even though pupils have composed well-thought-out and structured pieces of writing in a number of different formats.
- Good features of teaching include positive relationships between adults and pupils, where skilled staff support and challenge pupils sensitively. Questioning is used well by teachers and pupils are very clear about what they are expected to do to succeed.
- This year, additional support for disadvantaged pupils and nurture groups for pupils who find the challenges of being in class full time are effective. As a result, these pupils are making better progress throughout the school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement throughout the school is not yet consistently good for all groups of pupils and therefore requires further improvement.
- Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 improved dramatically so that it was similar to the national average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been below the national average in recent years. This year, improvements in progress in Key Stage 1 are helping to raise standards.
- Pupils in Year 6 in 2014 made better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. The proportion of pupils who achieved the highest standards in mathematics was very low.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is consistently below national averages.
- Achievement in the early years improved in 2014 with a greater proportion of children achieving a good level of development than found nationally.
- In 2014 disadvantaged pupils were approximately one term behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap in attainment with all other pupils nationally for 2014 was one and a half years in reading and writing and nearly two years in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in 2014 made better progress throughout Key Stage 2 than Year 6 pupils in 2013. Their progress was similar to that found for all other pupils nationally in reading and writing but not in mathematics where despite improvements on previous years, disadvantaged pupils in the school still made less progress than other pupils nationally. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is becoming more consistent which is helping to close gaps in attainment.
- The school tracks progress and attainment rigorously and school leaders hold meetings with teachers every six weeks to check the progress pupils are making. School data show that in the last academic year a greater proportion of pupils were making rapid progress in their learning and reaching age-related expectations. The school is checking the progress of groups and individuals carefully to ensure that this improvement is maintained. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups, or for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make variable progress. Their progress is tracked in great detail by the inclusion manager and this is leading to improvements. For example, some pupils are making small steps in learning that enable them to access more work with their peers in class while others are already making similar progress to other pupils in the school.
- The most able pupils are not always given sufficiently demanding work and this slows their progress. Their achievement is beginning to improve but their progress across the school is not consistently good.
- Every parent that completed the Parent View survey felt that their child was making good progress. While this is the case for some pupils, as shown in their books and progress in lessons, it is not always consistent. Pupils are making better progress in English than in mathematics; there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills when carrying out calculations or problem solving in mathematics.
- New approaches to teaching writing are helping to improve pupils' progress this year in Key Stage 1. This is less well established in Key Stage 2. In Years 3 to 6, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to practise writing in a variety of subjects. However their skills in using spelling, punctuation and grammar correctly are not developing well enough.
- Actions taken by the school to encourage pupils to read more at home and at school are having a positive impact on achievement in reading.

The early years provision

is good

- Provision in the early years has improved rapidly and is good. The headteacher and local authority consultant have worked with the dedicated early years team to improve the quality of teaching so that it is good. Children now make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are below those typically found for their age. None of the children achieved a good level of development in 2013 mainly because their writing skills were weak. Extremely rapid improvements in the setting meant that in 2014 a greater proportion of children achieved this good level of development than did so nationally. This meant that the majority of children had the necessary skills to be ready to start Year 1.
- The teacher makes careful observations to help plan the next steps in each child's learning and encourages parents to write about key moments of learning that happen at home. This promotes positive partnerships between school and home.
- Activities in the outdoor area allow children to problem solve. For example one girl was using large wooden equipment to build a bridge for the Billy Goats to cross. She carefully balanced the wooden pieces

and showed great resilience and concentration when her plan became tricky to implement.

- The teacher's questioning is targeted and precise. She checked on children's understanding about the properties of shape as they made tally marks to show how many of each shape they had found in the sandpit. One child decided to make the task more challenging by independently collecting a sand timer to see how many shapes he could find and name in a minute.
- Children are polite to each other and visitors and take turns sensibly showing that their behaviour is good.
- Robust safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are kept safe and secure in the early years.

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	114536
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	453690

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	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Lunt
Headteacher	Kerri Burns
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 February 2013
Telephone number	01273476708
Fax number	01273480488
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