

Cornerstone VA Primary School

Bader Way, Whiteley, Fareham, PO15 7JH

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- This is a happy school where pupils achieve well in terms of their personal, as well as academic, development.
- The school's very positive ethos reflects its Christian aims. Pupils are growing up as responsible caring young people.
- Pupils make good progress because they are well taught. They behave well and their attitudes to learning are consistently positive.
- The school is effectively and efficiently run. The headteacher leads by example. His vision and ambition for the growth of the school are shared by the governors, staff and parents. Together, they have ensured the school is particularly well placed to continue its journey.
- Ongoing improvements to teaching and learning, especially of reading and mathematics, are underpinned by accurate self-evaluation and effective assessment of how well pupils are doing.
- Arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for are outstanding. Unsurprisingly, pupils say they feel safe in school.
- The leadership of the early years provision is outstanding. Children make at least good progress. They are introduced to the joy of learning through good teaching and support.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, some of whom arrive unable to speak English, make outstanding progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching, although good, is not outstanding. Too few of the most able pupils in Year 2 are on course to achieve higher-than-average standards in writing. This is because expectations have been too low.
- The contribution of subject leaders to the middle management of the school is not yet fully effective. There are good models to build upon, but in some subjects, initiatives are too new and unproven in terms of their impact on pupils' learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all three classes on a variety of occasions, for the most part accompanied by the headteacher. He attended collective worship and observed pupils at lunch and in the playground.
- The inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body, 11 other governors, members of staff, a representative of the local authority and the advisory officer from the Diocese of Portsmouth.
- He looked at examples of pupils' work and heard a sample of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils reading.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at school documentation. This included data on pupils' progress, evidence of self-evaluation and procedures for managing staff performance.
- He evaluated the ways in which the school seeks to keep children safe.
- The views of 48 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector also met parents at the start of the school day to hear how they feel about the school.
- The inspector took note of views as expressed confidentially in 13 questionnaires returned by teaching and support staff.

Inspection team

Michael Burghart, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average primary school. It opened in September 2013 with 27 on roll and is gradually filling up from Reception.
- Children in Reception attend full time after a brief induction period. There are currently three classes, one for children in Reception, one for Year 1 and another for Year 2. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils join the school other than in Reception. Such pupils have a wide variety of different educational experiences.
- The school is in temporary accommodation pending the building of a new school on a site two miles away. When completed, the school will cater for 630 pupils.
- With no Year 6 pupils, there are no national assessment results to measure the school's performance against the government's floor standards, the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. A slightly below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, but this profile is rising.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding to give extra support to those known to be eligible for free school meals, and for children who are in care, is below average.
- There are no pupils with disabilities currently on roll, and the proportion of those with special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - making sure that the most able pupils consistently reach above-average levels in writing, as they already typically do in reading and mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to improve their work and handwriting as a result of the guidance teachers give them when marking their work.
- Build on the good quality of subject leadership which already exists in the school to improve the contribution staff make to the overall management of the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school is well led by the headteacher. He has created a leadership team whose drive and ambition for learning opportunities to meet the needs of all pupils, as well as being fun, are very successfully taking the school forward. Although this is currently a small school, leaders and managers 'think big' and make sure that it is well prepared for its future growth.
- The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching well through direct observation, reviewing planning, analysing outcomes in pupils' work and data analysis. Constructive feedback on strengths and areas for development are at the heart of continual improvement. Staff respond particularly well to this and the level of professional discussion is a credit to the school.
- Behaviour and attendance are well managed. Expectations are high and pupils respond by being keen to learn.
- The school is true to its Christian ideals and makes very good provision for pupils' personal, as well as academic, development. There is a very effective commitment to equality of opportunity and to seeing that no pupil is discriminated against. The way the principles of fairness, tolerance, consideration and democracy are fostered, when pupils negotiate class and school rules, ensures that pupils are being well prepared for the future. They benefit from, and gain, an appreciation of these British values.
- The role of middle leaders has recently been established. It is too soon (and in the development of the school there are too few of them) to see the full impact as yet. However, there are good examples on which to build already evident in the school, for instance, leadership of the early years and how mathematics is being developed.
- Additional funding derived from the pupil premium is used efficiently to support entitled pupils, for example in small-group and one-to-one sessions. Pupils achieve well as a result.
- Funding designed to improve pupils' appreciation of and participation in sport is effectively used. Sports coaches work with pupils and help improve staff knowledge and understanding of physical education.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant to pupils' needs and enjoyable. It is well planned. Regular reviews ensure that it covers all subjects of the National Curriculum. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, making a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school has robust and effective systems to ensure pupils are kept safe. Health and safety have a high priority. All required checks are meticulously carried out and recorded.
- Officers of the local authority and the diocese support the school very effectively with advice, training and practical help over appointments and budgeting.
- The school is extremely popular with parents. All of the high proportion of those who completed the Parent View questionnaire, and all of those who met with the inspector, would unreservedly recommend this school. They have a high level of confidence in the quality of teaching and care on offer.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make a strong and effective team. They have successfully led the school during its first five terms, building on the very effective groundwork that the core of the governing body completed before the school opened.
 - Governors are well informed. They regularly visit the school, analyse data and make sure they evaluate the impact of the decisions they make in terms of the success of pupils' learning and progress. Governors have a keen understanding of how pupils are doing compared with schools nationally, and through very good communication with staff, know how improvements can be made.
 - A key area of the success of governance is in how well governors are aware of the performance management of staff. Even within the constraints of a budget which is limited by, as yet, the small number of pupils on roll, governors have successfully sought ways to reward good practice. Although they have not had to, they are well prepared to tackle any underperformance of teachers and are in a very good position to challenge leaders and managers over the school's performance.
 - Governors pay careful attention to site security and are well trained in the safe recruitment of staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is typically at least good. For much of the time in and around the school it is outstanding.

- Attitudes to learning are strong and for the vast majority of time pupils are well focused on their work. They respond very well to topics and activities that interest and excite them and, despite a few occasions where they are a little too exuberant, stay on task.
- The reason that behaviour is not judged to be outstanding overall is that, as yet, it has not led to high standards. The headteacher and senior teacher are aware of this and, in conjunction with staff have created what is known as the Cornerstone Crucial Dozen. This very effectively links expectations of behaviour to the quality of learning in what amounts to a summary of the school's mission statement. A credit to the school is that there is a common commitment to making sure it works and that the profile of pupils' achievement is being improved.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying. They are adamant that there is no bullying of any kind. On the very rare occasions when it might occur, pupils report that it is swiftly and fairly dealt with. Pupils get on well together, showing that they are willing to accept differences and be considerate. Pupils new to the school, and the country, are welcomed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Senior leaders are meticulous in their design and monitoring of policies and procedures that cover all required aspects regarding safeguarding. Site security, safe recruitment of staff, child protection and all safety procedures have high priority. Risk assessments are in place for all off-site activities and visits. Robust entry and recognition systems ensure access to the school building is secure.
- Pupils are right to feel safe and they are encouraged to appreciate ways in which they can keep themselves safe. They have a good knowledge of road safety, much evident in 'walk to school week', and a good understanding, for their age group, of internet safeguards. They are regularly reminded about the importance of the possible dangers of strangers and when questioned reported that if they have a problem out of school they should find someone in a uniform for help. Children can relate exactly what to do if they have a problem, for example of injury or illness in school.
- All of the high proportion of parents who returned the Ofsted questionnaire, and all of those who spoke with the inspector, maintain that the school's care for pupils is of high quality.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. Teachers and learning support assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. This is especially the case in reading and mathematics, where pupils frequently achieve above-average levels. Here expectations are high and work is well planned to ensure success.
- Staff are skilled at questioning pupils in ways that require answers based on reflection and reasoning. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing rapidly as a consequence.
- Although the progress of the majority of pupils is good in writing, too few of the most able pupils reach the above-average levels that they consistently reach in reading and mathematics. The school has appreciated this, by virtue of its good self-evaluation, and has introduced additional training opportunities for staff. Although it is too soon to see the impact of this in higher results, pupils' work, school records of progress and the quality of learning seen in lessons indicate that improvements are being made.
- Pupils are being given opportunities to write for a wide variety of purposes and different styles through topics designed around pupils' interests. Writing about the characteristics of famous people and those from popular modern stories, such as *Frozen*, complements not only pupils' vocabulary and spelling but how well pupils express feelings and opinions. An issue that staff have identified, but have yet to address fully, is pupils' handwriting, which is too often not well formed. In many cases this is the result of the way pupils hold writing implements.
- Homework is used well to extend pupils' research and problem-solving skills. Pupils say that they find this interesting and challenging.
- Teachers mark pupils' work systematically, acknowledging effort and giving pointers for improvement. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity to take note of this advice in order to make even more progress.
- Teaching for those pupils with special educational needs is effective. Good links with outside specialists ensure pupils are well supported with work that is well suited to their ability and experience. Consequently, pupils make good and sometimes, as in reading, outstanding progress.
- A real strength of the school is in the way those pupils whose first language is not English are taught. Their outstanding progress is a credit to staff and the well-established links with parents.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Despite there only being data on pupils' performance for five terms, analysis clearly indicates that progress is good overall, whatever their starting points or when pupils might have joined the school. Progress is particularly good in reading and mathematics.
- Those with special educational needs often make even better progress than their classmates because support is effective. Gaps between them and other pupils, both within the school and nationally, are closing fast.
- A highlight of the school is the progress made by those pupils who start school with little or no English. They make rapid and sustained outstanding progress, especially in oral communication and reading, making the most of very effective support.
- Pupils who join the school at times other than the start of Reception are helped to settle in quickly. Staff are good at assessing what these pupils are capable of and what they need to do to make the same good progress as others in their classes.
- In 2014, when pupils had only been in school for less than a year, the results of the national phonics check were below the national average. The school put in place new planning, and improved staff knowledge and understanding through a programme of training. The resulting heightened awareness has brought about significant improvement. Early indications are that this year's results are above average and that improvement to reading across the school is a success story. Year 2 assessments currently show that the school's performance is above average for reading and mathematics, with a high proportion of pupils reaching above national average levels for this age group.
- Overall, the most able pupils make good progress. However, expectations for writing, which senior leaders have appreciated in hindsight were too low, resulted in virtually no pupils achieving a level above the national average in writing this year in Year 2. This is at odds with the performance of the most able pupils in reading and mathematics. Recent improvements to planning and teaching are having positive effects, and the most able pupils in Year 1 are already in line to attain the highest available levels, with some having already done so.
- School records and pupils' work indicate that progress is good in subjects such as science, geography and history that are delivered through themes in what is known at the school as a project based learning approach. Art work around the school gives good examples of pupils' achievement. The quality of singing in assembly makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development as well as musical skills.

The early years provision is good

- Children make good progress from starting points that are broadly typical of their age group. Highlights are in how well they develop communication skills and are emerging as readers. Children are progressing well in learning to count and compare as part of mathematical development. An area for further improvement is that some children's, mostly boys', physical skills of handling small equipment, such as pencils, scissors and paint brushes, are underdeveloped.
- From the very enthusiastic way children rush into class in the morning and the extremely positive comments of parents and staff, it is obvious that children feel safe and have a love for learning. They appreciate that activities are planned to take account of what will interest them. Cleaning out the 'zoo' and exploring the noises animals might make was great fun.
- The leadership of the early years provision is outstanding. The leader has an acute awareness and understanding of what is needed to promote young children's education. That provision is not yet judged as outstanding is due to initiatives not having had sufficient time to have full effect rather than any weakness in management.
- Teaching is good. School records and local authority monitoring show that it is often outstanding. Especially noteworthy is how effectively the well-planned programme of phonics, which associates letter and sounds, is taught. Children of all abilities make excellent use of this approach to read unfamiliar words. School analysis demonstrates that most children will achieve the early learning goals associated with reading by the end of Reception, well prepared for Year 1.
- Children are given a good balance of activities that staff direct them to and those they can choose. Their personal, social and emotional development and their knowledge and understanding of the world are developed well. This is often the result of structured learning opportunities that staff have prepared in and out of doors, which children are able to initiate for themselves. This is known at the school as Discovery Time.
- Working and playing together, children learn to be considerate, share, take turns and resolve problems by

negotiation. The most effective learning is where adults interact with children, sometimes in role play, and through their questioning extend children's reasoning skills. Such dialogue supports children's creativity and their ability to solve simple design problems.

- Very occasionally, when groups are allowed to stay on activities too long without interacting with adults, the limited range of things that they do restricts opportunities for learning.
- Children behave well and, although some find it difficult, are learning to listen and give others a chance to speak. Relationships are excellent. Children show that they have great faith in staff. They know they will be listened to.
- Taking part in whole-school worship and singing time fosters children's sense of belonging and successfully enhances their spiritual development. Children are well aware of right and wrong and, as is clear in deciding whose turn is next on the trikes, are developing an understanding of fairness.

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	139548
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	449868

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 but currently 4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Sandy Matthiens
Headteacher	Tim Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01489 660750
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