

The Mary Towerton School

Beacons Bottom, Studley Green, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP14 3XN

Inspection dates 4–5 June 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.

- Leadership and management, teaching, pupils' achievement and early years provision have all improved since the school was previously inspected.
- Teaching is now consistently good. Staff plan activities effectively to engage and challenge pupils.
- The achievement of all groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is good. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children in the early years make good progress and achieve well in all areas. They are confident in literacy and mathematics. Early years teaching is consistently good.
- The school provides a good range of learning opportunities. Pupils acquire good learning skills and use a variety of resources to help them. Pupils benefit from high quality physical education through the school's use of visiting specialists.
- Pupils enjoy school and always have positive attitudes. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together. Their behaviour is good, both inside and outside their classrooms.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after, and their parents agree. Pupils find the school friendly and welcoming.
- The school is very effectively led by the acting headteacher. Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and governors now provide effective challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance is below the national average for primary schools.
- Pupils do not consistently use teachers' marking and feedback to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine lessons and made shorter visits to seven phonics (linking letters and sounds) lessons. Observations were carried out jointly with the acting headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and analysed a randomly selected sample of their work from across the school. He analysed the school's performance data showing the attainment and progress of pupils.
- He also looked at attendance information, safeguarding arrangements and other key documents.
- The inspector observed pupils in the playground and around the school in order to judge their attitudes and behaviour. He held a discussion with a group of pupils.
- The inspector also held discussions with the acting headteacher, a subject leader and two governors.
- He held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.
- The inspector took account of the 10 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), and the 10 questionnaires from school staff.

Inspection team

Barnard Payne, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than most schools. It has two mixed-age classes; one has pupils in Reception and Year 1 and the other pupils in Year 1 and Year 2.
- Most pupils join the Reception class with limited pre-school experience. Children attend Reception full time.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than average, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority. There are too few eligible pupils in each year group to compare their attainment without the risk of identifying individual pupils.
- The school also receives the primary physical education and sport premium, designed to help primary schools improve the quality of the physical education and sports activities they offer their pupils.
- The school currently has an acting headteacher who has been seconded to the school for a year. A permanent headteacher will take up her post in September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with primary schools nationally.
- Ensure that pupils always use teachers' marking and feedback to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher has provided very effective leadership and secured consistently good teaching. She has worked with staff to create a culture of high expectations. Increased rigour in planning, assessment and the use of phonics to develop reading and writing have led to pupils making consistently good progress.
- Staff work effectively as teams and ensure that all groups of pupils behave and achieve well. In both classrooms there is a clear sense of purpose and pupils find it easy to learn. The acting headteacher sets clear objectives as part of the school's performance management; these are sharply focused on school priorities.
- Middle leadership is developing well and forms part of teachers' appraisal objectives. Middle leaders are well supported through their access to training and by being given the opportunity to take a leading role in developing aspects of the school's curriculum.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are regularly monitored and evaluated, and the outcomes shared with the governing body. The assessment system is rigorous and accurate.
- The school is strongly committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, providing additional support for those pupils that require it. The school makes very effective use of the pupil premium and physical education and sport premium. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium achieve at least as well as other pupils. The school makes very good use of external sports providers to give pupils a high quality physical education curriculum.
- The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities for pupils. These include the promotion of tolerance, fairness, clear rules and mutual respect. Consequently, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is consistently good. There is no use of discriminatory language. Pupils get along well together and their behaviour fully reflects the school's values. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding fully meets national requirements. Parents and pupils agree that pupils are kept safe and are well cared for.
- The school has worked successfully with the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust to bring about improvements in the two years since the previous inspection. This has included the appointment of the acting headteacher and a review of governance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance has improved significantly since the school was previously inspected. The governing body is now well organised, well informed and provides a high level of challenge, as well as support, for the acting headteacher. Governors have a secure understanding of performance data. They have been appropriately trained to undertake their roles. A designated governor ensures that safeguarding is regularly reviewed. The governing body tracks the progress of pupils well, and ensures that pupil premium funding is effectively used. Governors are kept informed about the quality of teaching and keep pay and performance under review. The governing body ensures that the school's resources are used efficiently and effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are always positive and engaged in their learning. Children joining the Reception year, most of whom have no pre-school experience, quickly acquire good working habits. Pupils agree that behaviour is good and they enjoy being in school.
- Pupils are responsive; they listen and act on instructions. Lessons flow well, with very little disruption. The attitudes of pupils enable them to work hard and achieve well.
- Pupils contribute to a strong school ethos. They conduct themselves well and are kind to one another. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are consistently strong. Pupils identify making friends as one of the best things about the school.
- Attendance is below the national average for primary schools. With such a small number of pupils in the school, percentages can be misleading, and some longer term absences are due to medical issues. However, attendance has not improved since the school was previously inspected, despite the school's work in following up absences and liaising with parents.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school. One said, 'It almost feels like home.' Older pupils are excited about moving on to their next school, which shows they feel secure and well supported. Parents agree that their children feel safe and are well looked after.
- Pupils understand about different kinds of bullying and learn about it as part of the curriculum. However, they can think of no instances of bullying and say that pupils are supportive and friendly towards one another.
- Pupils learn to keep themselves safe and this includes the safe use of computers and the internet.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers plan lessons well and address the needs of all abilities in their mixed-age classes. Parents agree that their children are taught well.
- Teachers set work at the right level to challenge each group of pupils. The effective use of teaching assistants enables teachers to plan different activities for each group of pupils in the class.
- Good teaching has enabled pupils to reach levels in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in recent years. Previous weaknesses in the teaching of writing have been overcome.
- Staff are creative and resourceful, finding different ways to engage and challenge pupils. Pupils say that teachers 'give us fun things to learn'.
- Staff maintain consistently high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. This leads to all pupils making good progress. Teachers frequently look for opportunities to move pupils on to more demanding work.
- Teachers monitor progress well and use this to plan future work. All teachers work part time. The handovers between teachers sharing the same class are highly effective, enabling pupils to continue building on what they have been learning.
- Marking is regular and informative. The school has accurately identified improving pupils' responses to marking and feedback as a priority; pupils are not consistent in using feedback to develop their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make consistently good progress and all abilities achieve well. From starting points that are often below those typical for their age, pupils make, and often exceed, the rates of progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment levels fluctuate a little year to year, reflecting different groups of pupils moving through the school. Over the past three years, pupils have mostly reached the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In some years there is a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and this has an impact on overall attainment figures. Taking account of their different starting points, pupils' achievement is good in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has significantly improved the teaching of phonics, which is now carried out systematically and well. This enables pupils to acquire the key skills they need for reading and writing. Pupils who have found reading more difficult make good use of their understanding of phonics to tackle unfamiliar words when reading. Reading has a high priority and progress is tracked rigorously.
- Achievement in writing has improved since the school was previously inspected. For example, a Year 1 pupil's work over the year shows that he has progressed from basic writing, such as labelling pictures, to using the past tense and making use of a writing checklist to include persuasive words.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and achieve well. Typically, all pupils in a mathematics lesson will have common objectives, but each ability group tackles them at a different level. In Reception and Year 1, pupils collected data and recorded it in a bar graph; they used a variety of methods over two lessons, including the use of tally charts and practical resources such as the game Connect 4.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported well and their achievement is good. Readers from this group are keen to make progress and are confident in attempting unfamiliar words. They are helped by adults explaining activities clearly and providing effective guidance.
- The most-able pupils reach high levels because the work they do is suitably challenging. For example, a pupil in Year 2 has made strong progress over the past year in writing, using vivid language to describe a scene. 'Dead plants stand, all small and shrivelled up. A fence of wood leads down the hill towards a lamp

lit house.’

- In some year groups there are high proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Although their attainment by the end of Year 2 is lower than that of other pupils, their rates of progress are above the rate typically expected and in line with the good overall rate of progress of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress and their achievement is good. Where their attainment is below that of other pupils, this is due to low starting points and learning difficulties. Their rates of progress this year exceed that of other groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision

is good

- Because most children have limited pre-school experience, they start in Reception with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. They make good progress due to good teaching that enables them to acquire positive attitudes to learning and confidence in using their literacy and mathematics skills.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Children show good levels of development and their achievement has improved since the school was previously inspected. Their progress and attainment in literacy and mathematics are now consistently good. They have plenty of opportunities to practise their key literacy and mathematics skills. Well-taught phonics sessions help them make good progress in reading and writing from their different starting points.
- Children’s work over the year shows good progress in all areas of learning. Work is assessed and annotated by adults to ensure that progress is rigorously tracked and that any difficulties are addressed. Adults’ expectations are high and the adults plan activities to challenge and develop children of all abilities.
- Children joining Reception from homes where English is not the first language do well. For example, one child was copying individual words on arrival in the class, but by the end of the year writes in sentences with full stops. Another has had plenty of opportunity to develop his mathematics; over three months he progressed from adding numbers to make 10 to ordering all the numbers to 20. He can weigh objects and compare them, explaining why one bucket goes down and the other up when using a balance.
- Children’s behaviour and their ability to work well together and with adults show that children feel safe and secure. They work safely both inside and outside the classroom. Children from different backgrounds work happily together.
- The Reception class is subject to the same safeguarding procedures as the rest of the school.
- Children in Reception share a class with pupils in Year 1, and often follow similar activities. They are, therefore, used to working in line with Key Stage 1 expectations and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

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| Unique reference number | 110208 |
| Local authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 462450 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 25 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Barbara Sparks |
| Headteacher | Lesley Godwin (acting headteacher) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4–5 June 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01494 482384 |
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