

Bishop Aldhelm's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Winston Avenue, Branksome, Poole, BH12 1PG

Inspection dates 23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
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 headteacher leads the school extremely well. He is ably supported by a skilful deputy headteacher and a strong team of thoughtful and determined senior leaders and governors.
- All staff are highly committed to ensuring all pupils do as well as they can.
- Following a recent dip in standards that were due in large part to circumstances beyond the control of the school, leaders have worked ceaselessly to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- Throughout the school, all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully to engage, challenge and motivate pupils.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils underpin teaching and learning. Teachers know their pupils well and set tasks that build on what they already know.
- Pupils behave extremely well and are keen to learn. They are unfailingly polite and enthusiastic.
- Pupils' positive attitudes owe much to the school's harmonious atmosphere, where the school's core values of fairness, respect and tolerance are evident at every turn.
- The school works very successfully to ensure pupils are kept safe and feel safe. Parents have every confidence that their children are happy in school and cared for well.
- Effective teaching in the early years means children get off to a good start. Staff promote their personal and social development very successfully. Children soon settle in and their positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their learning and progress.
- Governors know the school very well. They provide good support and challenge to the leadership team.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are some weaknesses in teachers' use of questioning and marking, and in how they set pupils targets for improvement.
- There are missed opportunities for children in the early years to develop their communication skills, be imaginative, explore materials and find out about the natural world when learning in the outdoor areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 26 lessons and parts of lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work. Ten of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors also met the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's information on pupils' progress, and records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- They observed movement around the school at playtime and at lunch breaks, and attended assemblies. Displays around school and in classrooms were scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account the 97 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They looked at the results of a recent school survey to which 300 parents had responded, and read a number of letters sent to the inspection team. They spoke informally with a number of parents.
- The 33 responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Fiona Robinson	Additional Inspector
Catherine Beeks	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is about twice the size of the average primary school. The majority of pupils are White British. Around 10% of pupils, half the national average, come from a range of minority ethnic groups. About 7% of pupils have English as an additional language, which is about average. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average. These needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication or moderate learning difficulties.
- Children in the early years attend full time in one of three Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, at the end of Year 6.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs in a separate building within the school grounds, known as the 'Lookout Club'.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and accelerate achievement by improving:
 - the use of marking to guide pupils on how to improve
 - teachers' use of questioning to find out and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - the setting of targets for pupils that are precise and individualised.
- Improve the use of the outdoor areas in the early years to enhance children's learning, particularly regarding:
 - communication and language skills
 - exploring materials
 - being imaginative
 - understanding of the natural world.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher plays a pivotal role in sustaining a caring community where all feel welcome and valued. Parents hold the school in high regard, and staff are overwhelmingly positive. Among the comments made by staff were: 'Our leadership team is incredibly supportive', 'A very strong leadership team is driving the school forward' and 'I absolutely love working at Bishop Aldhelm's.'
- The deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, and other staff with leadership responsibilities share a strong sense of purpose. Their resilient leadership and management are leading to rapid whole-school improvements in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching has improved, following changes to the teaching staff. Consequently, pupils across the school are achieving well. The quality of teaching is thoroughly checked, taking account of how pupils are progressing. Leaders are aware of some remaining variation in teaching, including the effectiveness of teachers' marking, questioning and target-setting.
- Year group leaders, and those with subject responsibilities, track pupils' progress carefully. The school's tracking system is used very effectively to spot individuals or groups of pupils at risk of falling behind, and to identify any trends. For example, there was an immediate and effective response when girls in Year 6 did not do as well as expected in mathematics last year. Smaller groups were established this year and girls benefited from sessions designed to increase their skills and confidence. As a result, their progress through Year 6 was a little more rapid than that of boys, and they have done equally as well as boys in reaching good standards.
- Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully. Checks are made frequently to help ensure that additional funding is used effectively to close any gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally.
- The curriculum engages, motivates and challenges pupils. Literacy and numeracy are given due emphasis and there are many opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their key skills in other subjects. For example, following a visit by a 'mini zoo', pupils in Year 2 rose to the challenge of communicating clearly in presentations they made to their classmates about various creatures.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven into the school's day-to-day life. The outcomes are clearly evident in how pupils learn and play together in harmony. Leaders ensure that all pupils are treated equally and that they are taught that discrimination of any kind is not to be tolerated.
- British values have a high profile within the school. The school's website provides a wealth of information about the school's approach. Pupils learn to value democracy, for example, through the election of class councillors and of house captains. Pupils were part of the consultation process in establishing the school values of 'Love, Unity, Inspiration and Courage'. Pupils are taught the values and reasons behind the British legal system and are encouraged to understand and exercise their rights and personal freedoms.
- Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs is promoted effectively. Pupils respect others whose background or religion is different from their own. Assemblies and discussions involving prejudices and prejudice-based bullying are followed up in class. This has an extremely positive impact on the harmonious relationships pupils have with one another. A school chapel provides a space where pupils of all faiths or religions reflect on their specific belief.
- The school uses additional funding for sports successfully to improve teaching in physical education. Specialists have been engaged to work alongside teachers during physical education lessons, and additional after-school activities have been established. As a result of such initiatives, there has been an increase in pupils' engagement in regular exercise, both in and out of school.
- There is a strong and effective partnership with parents. Among parents' comments were: 'The school is amazing', and 'I can't recommend the school highly enough.' Some parents wrote moving tributes about the way the school had supported their children during family illness and bereavement.
- Parents are widely consulted. They have an open invitation to meet the headteacher and a governor every half term and to complete an annual survey. Weekly newsletters include a wide range of relevant topical information and supplement the detailed information included in the school's website.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures meet all statutory requirements. Exceptionally rigorous strategies help to ensure pupils' safety. All staff understand their responsibilities and are well trained. Leaders carefully monitor the impact of procedures to ensure that support measures continually evolve to meet fresh challenges.
- The local authority is confident in the capacity of leaders and managers to bring about improvement, and provides 'light touch' support.

- The headteacher provides training in performance management for governors across the local authority and academies. He also supports other church schools in their provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors have a wide range of relevant skills that are augmented by further training. They have a clear understanding of school performance information and are well informed, through reports and their own well-planned visits, about the progress pupils are making. They ask insightful and challenging questions, ensuring that leaders maintain their focus on improvement. Each member of the governing body has a programme of visits to school during which they observe teaching at first hand, talk to staff and pupils, and gauge their views. As a result, governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching. Governors seek assurance that any underperformance is addressed, and that decisions about teachers' pay awards and promotion are linked appropriately to the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. The governing body regularly checks all safeguarding arrangements and ensures that they are fully compliant with current legislation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is typically exemplary. Pupils are consistently polite and courteous. They get along extremely well with one other, showing mutual respect as they learn and play together. They behave very well when not immediately supervised by an adult.
- Pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their progress. They are ever keen to answer questions and contribute ideas. They discuss sensibly and cooperate very well when working with their classmates. At the same time, when asked to work silently on their own, they do so responsibly.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is evident in their increasing attention to presenting their work neatly and accurately as they move through the school. Year 6 pupils, for example, showed justifiable pride in their neat handwriting and in their accurate presentation of graphs and geometric shapes.
- Attendance is good. Pupils relish opportunities to make contributions to the smooth running of the school. They take seriously their responsibilities as school councillors, house captains, play leaders and lunchtime helpers.
- Staff are instrumental in instilling the core values that underpin the school's approach to managing behaviour. This was evident, for example, during an assembly about making the best choices. Pupils willingly shared their ideas, such as: 'Never give up and you will shine so bright'; 'We all have special gifts'; and 'Show love to other people'.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The excellent relationships in the school underpin the trust pupils have in the staff and their complete confidence that they will help them to overcome any worries. Pupils are sure that they could talk over any concerns with an adult, as some said, because 'adults are really helpful and look after you', and 'teachers go out of their way to help.'
- Pupils are well informed about different types of bullying, including that based on prejudice, and are aware of the difference between bullying and occasional squabbles. They are adamant there is no bullying in their school.
- Pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves safe. They understand the potential dangers when using the internet or mobile phones and know the importance of not revealing personal information. Regular training, for example, on road safety, together with swimming lessons and fire drills, helps pupils to stay safe. The curriculum includes activities that enable pupils to share their emotions, learn the importance of respect and to prepare themselves for the future.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a safe haven for pupils at the beginning and end of the day.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils respond positively to the interesting lessons that teachers plan. They enjoy learning, work diligently and achieve well.
- Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well. They track pupils' progress carefully, making frequent adjustments to their planning to help ensure new learning builds on things pupils know, understand and can do. The tasks they set pupils to do are generally pitched at the right level of difficulty.
- Teachers ask questions which probe pupils' existing knowledge and deepen their understanding. For example, skilled questioning was seen to be helping pupils to improve the structure of their sentences through making good use of subjunctive clauses. Occasionally, such opportunities are missed.
- Good teaching means that pupils develop secure numeracy skills. Teachers successfully show them how to use these skills when exploring relationships between numbers and when solving mathematical problems.
- Teachers and teaching assistants implement the school's systematic programme for teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) effectively, enabling pupils to become increasingly confident in reading and writing unfamiliar words. Pupils gain valuable additional skills reading for research through their topic work.
- The teaching of writing is equally effective. In addition to work in literacy lessons, pupils have frequent opportunities to write in subjects other than English. Pupils in Year 3, for example, usefully developed their skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar when completing written work in geography. Most written work in pupils' books and on display is completed carefully.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and set them targets for improvement. In most cases, they give clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. Pupils respond well to this guidance, enhancing the good progress they make from week to week and through the year. Some marking, however, is insufficiently precise and does not help pupils to understand what they need to focus on to improve. Similarly, some targets that pupils are set are too general, such as 'improve punctuation', rather than helping them by providing a specific individual goal.
- Teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers to support disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English. They make sure that pupils understand fully what they have been asked to do and provide judicious support without spoonfeeding.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The strategies introduced by leaders following a recent dip in achievement have led to the attainment of most pupils rising sharply, particularly in the last year. Achievement is now good throughout the school. Pupils are making good progress and reaching above the nationally expected levels in reading writing and mathematics by the end of both key stages.
- Children enter the early years with skills and understanding below the levels typical for their age and make good progress in the Reception classes. Pupils continue this good progress in Key Stage 1. This is evident from the above-average proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic screening check and in the Year 2 follow-up check.
- The few pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language make particularly good progress in developing their communication skills through Years 1 and 2, helped by the school's strong focus on the teaching of phonics.
- Until 2013, pupils' overall achievement was typically above average. For two years, progress for some pupils through Key Stage 2 was less than expected, and too few pupils exceeded expected standards.
- The school's accurate checks on progress, together with evidence from pupils' work, now show much better progress through Key Stage 2. Almost all pupils leaving this year are reaching the levels expected for their age in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils working above expected levels has increased and is above recent national averages.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have rapidly improved their progress, which now matches, and sometimes exceeds, that of other pupils in the school
- The gap between the attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school has narrowed considerably over the last two years. From a gap, in these subjects, equivalent to two terms behind national averages in 2013, this reduced to one term in 2014. The very few disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 6 are working at similar levels to other pupils in the school and to other pupils nationally. The school's meticulous assessment records indicate that the

progress of disadvantaged pupils in each year group matches or exceeds that of their classmates in almost all cases.

- Pupils develop a real enthusiasm for reading. Year 6 pupils talked enthusiastically about the wide range of support that they had enjoyed in recent years, including the after-school reading club. One exclaimed, 'I used to struggle with reading and now I'm a Level 6!' Pupils offered mature comments about different authors and their writing styles.
- Many pupils write with considerable flair, using a variety of literacy devices they come across in their reading, such as the use of rhetorical questions. Pupils' use of spelling, punctuation and grammar is typically accurate. The most able pupils achieve well. Throughout the school, they rise to additional challenges that help them to broaden and deepen their knowledge. In mathematics, for example, the most able pupils in Year 6 enthusiastically tackled work on translations and reflections, usually introduced in Year 8. The improvements in teachers' expectations, linked to revised National Curriculum requirements, have contributed to pupils' accelerated progress.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Reception classes with skills lower than those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language, and personal development.
- All groups of children make good progress through the Reception Year, particularly in their personal and social development. The overall proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above average.
- Children enjoy excellent relationships with the adults who teach them. They are eager to learn, and behave well. They learn to manage their feelings and to behave appropriately in different situations, such as when listening to a story or learning alongside one another.
- Children make a good start in reading, although a smaller proportion of children exceed expectations in speaking and writing skills than in reading. Children make good gains in mathematics. Although most reach the expected levels in exploring materials and being imaginative, and in their understanding of the world, very few exceed the expected levels in these areas of learning.
- Children's phonic skills develop rapidly because of the careful planning for their different needs. Children take full advantage of their daily phonics sessions, which contributes strongly to their good progress in reading. The quality of teaching is good. Adults provide the children with exciting and challenging learning experiences in the colourful and well-resourced classrooms. A constant hum of talk as they learn helps to develop their communication and language skills.
- Adults ensure that children are well cared for and are kept safe. They give children's safety and well-being high priority. They ensure that safeguarding procedures, such as keeping the learning areas secure, are followed diligently. Parents are very confident that their children are safe at school.
- Leadership and management are good. The early years leader makes regular checks on the quality of teaching. He helps to ensure that activities are pitched at the right level and that all children make good progress. However, he is well aware of how the provision can be improved, including the enhancement of opportunities for children to learn outdoors.
- The outdoor area includes a spacious covered 'open classroom' with good resources for children to climb, build and explore shapes. However, few of the activities organised in this area are lively enough to spark the children's interest. They rarely promote their imaginative play, stimulate communication and language development, or promote the children's early writing skills. Opportunities are also missed for children to explore materials and learn about the natural world.

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	113830
Local authority	Poole
Inspection number	461787

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	540
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Gridley
Headteacher	Neil Revell
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 September 2011
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