

# Fordcombe Church of England Primary School

Fordcombe Green, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0RY

**Inspection dates** 10–11 February 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils, parents, staff and governors are, with justification, proud of their good school.
- Pupils are a credit to the school. They develop as exceptionally well-rounded, confident individuals who enjoy their time in school. They are friendly, caring and well mannered.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors provide determined and focused leadership for the school. As a result of their work, the school has improved since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is now good. Teachers plan activities that interest and engage pupils. All groups of pupils learn well and make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are above average.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and want to do well. They are inspired and motivated by their teachers.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, around the school and in the playground. They feel safe and happy at school and are well looked after.
- Children get a good start to school in the early years. They make good progress, and develop confidence, independence and a love of learning. They are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- Parents are very supportive of all that the school does and have every confidence in the school's leadership. One parent reflected the views of many with the comment, 'We are happy to be part of such a wonderful school community.'

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work does not consistently challenge all pupils or promote a depth of learning, knowledge and understanding.
- The role of middle leaders is not yet having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and outcomes in the foundation subjects.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that all pupils consistently make the rapid progress of which they are capable by:
  - making sure that work provides appropriate challenges
  - enabling pupils to gain a greater depth of learning, knowledge and understanding.
- Strengthen the role of middle leaders to ensure that they have a greater impact on the quality of teaching, learning and achievement in the foundation subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership for the school and is very well supported by the deputy headteacher. As a result, the school has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching and the progress pupils make are now good.
- All leaders, staff and governors share an ambition and determination to build on the strengths and improvements forged since the previous inspection and work together as a strong team to provide the best learning and personal experiences for pupils.
- Parents and pupils appreciate the benefits of a small school community. Many parents commented on the friendly, happy atmosphere and the fact that staff know all the pupils well. A group of pupils agreed with one who said, 'We are all friends here, we look after each other, it's like being part of a big family.'
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school and express every confidence in the leadership and the staff. One parent summed up the views of many with the comment, 'The friendly, happy, nurturing atmosphere has been maintained while the standards of work and expectations from pupils and teachers have increased.' Another reported that, 'We have seen the teaching, care, creativity and professional leadership of the school grow from strength to strength.'
- The enthusiasm of the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensures that staff morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants welcome the opportunities to develop their individual skills and meet whole-school priorities through further training.
- Senior leaders and governors rigorously check pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and all aspects of the school's work. There is a clear, shared understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development, which inform the school improvement plan.
- Senior leaders and governors hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. If any weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning are identified, support is given, action points are followed up and improvement is expected.
- The headteacher and governors have correctly identified the need to increase leadership capacity to ensure that there is further impact and influence on the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils in the foundation subjects. Currently, English is led very effectively and the impact is evident in the improved progress and attainment in reading and writing. Similarly, leadership of mathematics has had a positive impact. Currently a new mathematics leader is being coached to take on this role as the previous leader has moved on.
- A key factor in pupils' improved outcomes and their outstanding personal development is the impact of the curriculum. Leaders have been innovative in designing a curriculum that inspires and motivates learners and is strongly underpinned by pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One member of staff commented, 'Our curriculum is a real strength. Parents often comment on the activities that children have gone home and raved about. I feel we are supported by the headteacher to be innovative and creative teachers.'
- Teachers plan the subjects taught carefully to engage pupils' interests and spark their enthusiasm and thirst for learning. Learning is enriched by a wealth of extra activities including residential and day trips, visitors to school and a range of clubs. These activities help pupils to learn new skills and make a significant contribution to their personal as well as their academic development. Many pupils spoke with enthusiasm about memorable learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.
- Sport and the arts have a high profile in the school. During the inspection, over one third of the pupils participated in a music recital for the rest of the school and parents. Pupils demonstrated their skills on a wide range of instruments, playing a diverse range of musical pieces, and their involvement greatly enhanced their confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because all staff and pupils promote and demonstrate fundamental British values in all areas across the school. One parent commented that Year 6 pupils are 'encouraged to be leaders and to think critically about the world and its challenges'. Tolerance and respect are fostered very effectively through the school's values and the subjects taught. A parent wrote, 'Our son has grown so much not just in his academic ability but as a person, having been taught great values during his time in school.'

- Pupils learn about and celebrate different religions and cultures. All pupils agree that the school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally. One parent wrote, 'Kindness and acceptance of differences seems to pervade every corner of the school.' Pupils have a strong sense of community and understand the need for rules within the school and the wider society.
- The school makes good use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding. The funding is spent in a range of ways to enhance the existing good provision for PE. These include the provision of additional afterschool clubs, sports specialists, training for Year 6 pupils to become play leaders and increased opportunities to take part in competitive sports. These activities enhance the skills of pupils and teachers and therefore improve outcomes for pupils.
- The school uses additional funding effectively for a small number of disadvantaged pupils. It is used to provide a range of additional support as appropriate to the needs of the pupils. This ensures that they make similar progress to others as well as being included in the full life of the school.
- The local authority has supported and worked productively with the school well since the previous inspection to ensure that improvement has been made.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body shares the ambition and aspirations of the headteacher to ensure that the school continues to improve.
  - Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge to leaders. They are very well informed by the headteacher and their own monitoring work to enable them to do this. They have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the key priorities for further development.
  - Governors are aware of the quality of teaching and are involved in decisions relating to promotion and pay increases.
  - They ensure that additional funding is used effectively through monitoring to determine that it is making a difference for pupils.
  - The Chair of the Governing Body has forged links with colleagues and works tirelessly to ensure that the governing body reviews and improves its effectiveness in holding the school to account for its performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met. All staff are trained, policies are up to date, and procedures are robust and well known by all staff.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. As a result, pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have improved and are good.
- The teachers and teaching assistants work very well together in a culture of mutual support and strong teamwork. Staff are good role models for pupils.
- Teachers provide lessons that capture the interest of pupils and motivate them. Pupils' good behaviour and excellent personal skills help them work together well, share ideas and opinions, and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6, for example, were engrossed in their work based on *The Princess' Blankets*. They had a lively discussion about the author's choice of vocabulary for creating shifts in mood to prepare to write a 'love letter' in role. They handled the text and the task with maturity and sensitivity, and their discussion contributed well to their spiritual development. They made excellent progress in meeting their learning objectives in writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils well to check on learning and pick up any misunderstandings to help pupils make good progress.
- There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching reading, writing and mathematics, and good opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects, particularly writing.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, want to do well and work hard. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very good. As a result, pupils are confident to take risks with their learning, try things out for themselves and express their opinions. They know their opinions and efforts are valued and that if they do not understand something, teachers will always take the time to explain and give further support.

- The school's policy for marking and feedback is used consistently across the school. Pupils say that teachers' comments help them know how to improve their work. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to succeed and have increasing opportunities to reflect on the learning and assess for themselves how well they think they have done in a lesson and in meeting their targets.
- Teachers generally have high expectations for pupils' learning in lessons and challenge them appropriately, and there are examples of outstanding teaching, especially evident in Years 5 and 6. On occasion, however, the work teachers plan does not always enable pupils of different abilities to make the more rapid progress of which they are capable. Sometimes the work for the most-able pupils is not challenging enough to promote sufficient depth, knowledge or understanding.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils thrive in a happy, caring environment and develop as exceptionally well-rounded individuals and confident, self-assured and resilient learners. They enjoy their time at school and participate with great enthusiasm in all that the school offers them.
- Attendance over the past two years has been above the national average and leaders carefully track the attendance of different groups and individuals, and work with parents to promote regular attendance.
- Staff know all the pupils very well and, as a consequence, individual needs are supported very effectively. Many parents commented on the quality of the pastoral care provided: for example, 'The pastoral care is excellent and our child feels secure and settled and eager to learn.'
- Pupils are exceptionally caring and respectful of each other and adults. The inspector was impressed with pupils' good manners and friendly greetings each morning and during the day.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their responsibilities in school and take them seriously: for example, as class ambassadors, members of the pupil council and play leaders. There are many opportunities for pupils to take the lead in all aspects of school life including running clubs and leading acts of worship.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They know how to stay safe when using the internet and social media, and they play a part in promoting this awareness across the school.
- Pupils say they are not aware of any bullying in school. They are very aware, however, that bullying can take different forms and are very confident that if any problems should arise in school, teachers would listen to them and help them. They know they are safe to learn without any type of discrimination as they know that any language or actions that may cause offence would not be tolerated.
- All the parents who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children feel safe in school and are well looked after.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils show responsible attitudes and conduct themselves well in the playground, at lunchtimes and around the school. Sometimes, as seen when the whole school gathered for the music recital, behaviour is exemplary.
- School records confirm that behaviour is good over time. Pupils know and understand the behaviour system and are very clear about what is expected.
- Occasionally, when pupils' interest is not sustained in lessons or work is not demanding enough, some can become distracted and lose their focus on learning. Pupils agree that pupils behave well most of the time but on rare occasions in lessons a few do not behave as expected. They say teachers deal with this well and it does not stop them learning.
- Parents agree that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved.

## **Outcomes for pupils** are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. By the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and attainment is above that found nationally.
- Caution needs to be taken when interpreting published achievement data due to the small numbers in Year 2 and Year 6. For example, in Year 6 in 2015, one pupil represented approximately 8% of the group.

- Pupils' work in their books, however, and the school's information about their progress show that pupils currently in the school make good progress overall from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is a little uneven across year groups. It is strongest in Years 5 and 6 as a result of good and sometimes outstanding teaching.
- For the past two years, standards have been above the national average, which is a marked improvement from the previous inspection in 2013.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 was above that found nationally. All pupils reached the expected attainment in writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling. By the end of Year 2 in 2015, attainment was at or above the national average and stronger in reading than in writing or mathematics.
- In 2015, all pupils made at least the expected progress by the end of Year 6 in writing. Most made the expected progress in mathematics and reading. In mathematics, the proportion was above the national figure and in reading it was just below.
- The school has focused on reading and consequently there has been a marked improvement in outcomes. Reading for enjoyment is promoted very well across the school. Pupils develop as fluent, expressive readers who can express their preferences for authors and styles of writing and give considered reasons for their opinions. Pupils said they love the new library so much that they would like more time to read in it. They are also very enthusiastic about the texts they read in class which link to their topic theme. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils are really enjoying reading *Floodland* as part of their topic 'What's so special about water?'
- In the 2015 phonics screening check (linking sounds and letters) for pupils in Year 1, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was considerably above the national figure. Pupils use their phonics skills well to help them read unfamiliar words. As they progress, they develop a range of strategies to help them read and make sense of what they are reading.
- Pupils have increasing opportunities to write across a range of subjects as well as in English lessons, which is helping to lift their achievement. Their wide range and enjoyment of reading is having a positive impact on their writing. One pupil explained how he was able to use the word 'cacophony' in his writing because he came across it in his reading.
- The most-able pupils currently in the school are generally challenged to achieve well. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels by the end of Year 6 was above national figures and particularly strong in mathematics. There are a few occasions, however, when pupils currently in the school are not challenged sufficiently well to make the better than expected progress of which they are capable, and to develop a depth of learning, knowledge and understanding.
- All groups, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability, make similarly good progress to others in the school. The provision for these groups is managed well, their needs are identified at an early stage, and appropriate and effective support is given. In 2015, there were no disadvantaged pupils in the Year 6 group and too few who had special educational needs to comment in detail on their achievement. Both groups across the school benefit, however, from additional support in lessons and when working individually or in small groups outside the classroom.

## Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are generally typical for their age and with strengths in their personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress in the Reception Year and are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- In 2015, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was above that found nationally. There is a determined and successful focus on children's writing, phonics and reading skills as well as interesting activities across all areas of learning.
- Adults know the children well. There are good procedures to get to know them and their families before they start at school. Good relationships with parents ensure that they are well informed about their children's progress and can work in partnership with the school to support their children's learning.
- Good leadership of the early years ensures that children learn effectively in a stimulating, safe and secure environment. There is a welcoming, friendly atmosphere, children are happy and settle calmly into the routines of the day. One parent commented, 'I couldn't be happier with her progress and happiness at the school.'

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Activities are planned that capture the interest and imagination of the children so they quickly develop a love of learning. Assessment is used well to plan the next steps for learning. A record of their achievements at school and at home is made throughout the year. Parents and children especially like the opportunity to share 'WOW' moments in class.
- Children have many opportunities to use writing as a means of communication and so develop good early writing skills. For example, children, wearing their 'fact hats' enjoyed writing interesting information they were learning in their celebration of Chinese New Year.
- Children were very keen to share their knowledge of number by accurately ordering and sequencing numbers along a dragon using the interactive board.
- Children's independence is promoted well and children develop confidence and enquiring minds as a result. They behave well, sharing and cooperating well with each other at work and play in the classroom and the outdoor area. The outdoor area has been developed well and provides opportunities for learning in a range of areas including promoting children's physical skills and imaginative play.
- Staff ensure that all the safeguarding and welfare requirements appropriate to this age group are met. They ensure that children are kept safe and learn how to keep themselves safe. All the necessary actions are taken to support any child whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118719
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection Number</b>	10002357

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	95
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Finch
<b>Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge</b>	Christopher Blackburn
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 740224
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.fordcombe.kent.sch.uk">www.fordcombe.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@fordcombe.kent.sch.uk">office@fordcombe.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23–24 October 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.



## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in seven lessons. She talked to pupils about their work and looked at the work in pupils' books. She observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. The inspector also talked to pupils about reading and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents including the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The inspector looked at the 47 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 26 written comments. She also took account of 13 questionnaires returned by staff and 31 returned by pupils.

## Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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