

# Kennet Valley Primary School

Carters Rise, Calcot, Reading RG31 7YT

<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 April 2016
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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

- Strong leadership has led to many improvements since the last inspection. Despite major disruption to staffing, and a major building programme, the excellent work of the acting headteacher has produced a coherent team of staff who work together very effectively to raise achievement.
- The governing body has transformed its practice and, with good support from the local authority, has played a major part in driving the improvements to provision.
- Since September, many of the improvements have come to fruition. The quality of teaching has been much more consistent and pupils' progress has been rapid as a result. Year 6 pupils, in particular, have made up a lot of lost ground this year.
- Pupils now have very positive attitudes to learning, work hard and behave well. This has strongly supported better achievement this year.
- Teachers use the new assessment systems to tailor work carefully to the needs and abilities of different groups. Tasks are challenging but manageable, leading to good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Teaching is lively and interesting, so pupils are engaged and generally maintain their concentration throughout lessons.
- Pupils rightly feel safe in school and are confident that the adults will look after them well.
- Children get a good start in the early years. They enjoy school and make good progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are still some inconsistencies in teaching. Occasionally, adults do not check effectively enough on how all groups are getting on, so do not address misconceptions in a timely way.
- Sometimes, teachers do not show pupils clearly enough what they need to do, so they are confused and their progress slows.
- Teachers do not always make full use of the skills of teaching assistants throughout lessons.
- The concentration on raising basic standards in English and mathematics this year, although justifiable and effective, has led to a lack of depth in other subject areas, notably in science, and leaders in these areas have had little chance to improve provision.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching and learning, and so raise standards, particularly by:
  - always checking on the progress of different groups in class, so that any who have misconceptions can be given help in a timely way
  - making sure, through more careful explanations or demonstrations, that adults show pupils clearly what is expected of them, so they know just what to do and make faster progress
  - making fuller use of the skills of teaching assistants so they spend more time in helping pupils to learn.
  
- Broaden the curriculum, and improve pupils' achievement, by spending more time on subjects other than English and mathematics, ensuring that:
  - subjects are studied to greater depth and pupils have greater understanding
  - more attention is paid to investigative work in science
  - subject leaders have more opportunity to check on provision and outcomes, so they are better able to help their colleagues to make improvements.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Over the last five terms, the acting headteacher worked successfully with colleagues to improve the quality of education in the school, despite major disruption to staffing. She promoted a strong team ethos, so that staff worked together effectively to make teaching better, and to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- The acting headteacher insisted on consistency in practice from teachers and they responded well to this, making the school an increasingly cohesive learning community. A common approach by adults, high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and a consistent stress on positive values have transformed pupils' approach to learning. Pupils are now keen to learn, work hard and take a pride in their success. These positive traits have strongly supported the major improvement to pupils' progress in this school year.
- Other leaders play an increasingly strong role in managing improvements. Leaders for key stages help to promote consistency of practice, and the leaders for English and mathematics have played a major part in the rapidly improving achievement in these subjects.
- Leaders manage teaching well. They check teachers' performance carefully, and give them clear guidance to help them improve. 'Non-negotiable' aspects of practice have ensured much greater consistency across the school. Teachers are set clear targets for how their pupils should achieve, and are held to account for this. The school provides carefully chosen extra training to help staff to refine their practice, according to their individual needs.
- Teachers have worked hard to develop new assessment systems to meet the new government requirements to assess pupils' progress 'without levels'. Teachers are now making good use of assessment to check how well pupils are doing. They provide extra help where it is needed to those pupils in danger of falling behind. Leaders are increasingly using the system effectively to spot trends in the achievement of different classes or groups, and to take action to address any issues. Work with the local authority and other local schools, as well as with colleagues within school, have helped ensure the accuracy of the assessments made.
- The new headteacher has already formed a close working partnership with her deputy, and they share clear priorities. They are well placed, with staff and governors, to take the school forward.
- The curriculum has had a particularly strong emphasis on mathematics and English in the current year, after weak results in national assessments in 2015. This has helped to fill major gaps in pupils' basic skills, so they are making up lost ground from previous years. However, as a consequence, the time spent on other subjects has been limited. There has been too little opportunity for pupils to study subjects in depth and gain mastery. In science, there has not been enough attention given to developing pupils' understanding of investigation or their skills in practical work. The school has identified this problem, and that they are in a position to address it now that pupils' basic skills are much better.
- The curriculum is particularly strong in promoting pupils' personal development. They gain a good understanding of British values, and show a good understanding of how these relate to the school's values and their own family values. They value each other's friendship and show tolerance of other's ideas and different cultures. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school has spent pupil premium money effectively. It tailors what it provides to the individual needs and abilities of each eligible pupil. Funding is used to support pupils' academic progress, as well as to enable all of them to take a full part in all aspects of school life. Leaders track the impact of spending very carefully on an individual basis, and modify provision according. Eligible pupils are making good progress as a result.
- Extra funding for sports and physical education is spent well and supports pupils' involvement in exercise and their enjoyment of sports. The wide range of popular after-school clubs, including dance and a variety of sports as well as coaching and training for staff, all contribute to this. Pupils are currently looking forward to their participation in the 'Race for Life'.
- The local authority has provided strong support to help the school move forwards during difficult circumstances. Training for staff, help with leadership and management, and in dealing with difficult staffing issues, have all been valued by the school. Governors have also appreciated the support and guidance they have received.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The governing body takes a much greater role in the management of the school than at the time of the last inspection. It has recruited new members with key skills that are used to benefit developments in the education provided. There are good systems in place to keep the governors fully informed about how well pupils are making progress and about the quality of teaching. This information is backed up by regular, structured visits to the school to see its day-to-day work. This helps governors to challenge

leaders and hold them to account for the school's performance, as well as to provide useful support and guidance. Strong systems are in place to assess the impact of decisions on pupils' learning and the school's effectiveness.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are vigilant in checking on pupils' safety and well-being, and have received appropriate training, including in how to prevent extremism. Good links with parents, who are very positive about their children's safety in school, and with other agencies, contribute well. Records are maintained conscientiously and kept fully up to date. Governors are fully involved and have undertaken appropriate training. They give high priority to safeguarding issues. A recent external survey of the school's systems was very positive.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have high expectations and make these clear to pupils. Relationships are good and routines are well established so that time is spent productively in learning.
- A major improvement since the previous inspection is the use of assessment to plan different work for different groups of pupils, according to their ability. This is generally done well, so that work is neither too easy nor too hard, and ensures that pupils make good progress. The most-able pupils, in particular, are often given challenging tasks that make them think, and deepen and extend their understanding well.
- Teachers are good at involving pupils in tasks and maintaining their attention. They provide good opportunities for pupils to work together and talk to each other about their ideas. This helps to maintain pupils' interest, as well as developing their speaking, listening and social skills very well.
- Pupils benefit from extra support from skilled adults when they are working, particularly those pupils who struggle with academic work or have special educational needs or disability. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning at such times but, when the teacher is talking to the whole class, sometimes are not given meaningful tasks, so spend their time watching rather than helping pupils to learn.
- In most instances, teachers keep a check on how well pupils are getting on during lessons, intervening to give extra help when needed, so that pupils do not waste time because they have misunderstood something. Adults also challenge those who are succeeding in their work to refine and extend it. Occasionally, the adults do not get round all the different groups until well into a session, and do not spot pupils who have misconceptions to give them help quickly.
- Teachers are good at giving pupils clear feedback on how they are doing, either orally or through written marking in their books. They ensure that pupils have time to respond to their advice, and the improvements pupils make as a result are clear. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- In general, teachers explain ideas to pupils well and often illustrate their explanations using interactive whiteboards, which makes things clearer and helps hold pupils' attention. Teachers frequently show pupils just what is expected of them in a particular task, so that pupils know what is wanted and what success will look like. This supports good progress. At times, however, teachers do not 'model' tasks in this way clearly enough, so that pupils are puzzled and their progress is slow until they obtain extra help.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on positive values and the pupils respond positively to this. They are thoughtful and considerate of others and their good understanding of British values such as democracy, the rule of law and tolerance prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils feel safe in school and know that the adults look after them well. They have learned how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, for example through the extensive work that has been done on being safe when using the internet. Pupils in Year 3 made great progress in their understanding of safety when they undertook 'risk assessments' of the environment, working with high levels of enthusiasm in the 'forest school'.
- Pupils have learned about different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, and know how it differs from other kinds of misbehaviour. They know what they should do if an incident should occur, but say that these are rare. A group of pupils in Year 6 could not recall any problems in the last year.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They understand the school's expectations and try hard to meet them. They are friendly, polite and sensible, and show good manners around the school, greeting visitors cheerfully, and holding doors open for others.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in class, an issue at the previous inspection, are now strengths of the school. Pupils enjoy learning. They listen attentively to adults, and are keen to succeed in their work. They concentrate well and take a pride in their achievements. If they make mistakes, they show resilience in tackling them, and are coming to see these as opportunities to learn more.
- Occasional disruptions in class from a few pupils, who struggle to conform to the school's expectations of behaviour, are dealt with well by adults. In discussion, pupils show compassion and understanding of others' needs, and say that such incidents are not allowed to disrupt their own learning.
- Pupils have good relationships with each other and work well together on collaborative tasks. They express their own ideas confidently, and listen to and respect each other's suggestions.
- At breaktimes, boys and girls from different backgrounds play happily together and show care and concern for others, particularly for younger children. Play is lively but sensible and pupils are conscious of the need to play safely and take heed of others.
- Good behaviour and relationships are also to be seen at the school's breakfast club, where pupils can eat a good breakfast while joining in a positive social occasion.
- Good work by the school has improved attendance, so that it is now broadly average, and more fully reflects pupils' enjoyment of school.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are good

- For several years, pupils' progress had been too variable, because of inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Results of national assessments had, nonetheless, generally been broadly average but in 2015 were weak, particularly in mathematics, although all pupils in Year 6 made the expected progress in writing.
- There were varied reasons for lower achievement last year, some of them related to the particular cohorts, although many pupils had gaps in their learning because of weak teaching earlier in their school career. The pupils in Year 2 suffered from the shock of the sudden death of their teacher, and the instability and uncertainty that followed this. The pupils in Year 6 had had particularly weak teaching in some classes earlier in key stage 2, and good progress during Year 6 was not enough to make up all the lost ground.
- There has been a sharp increase in pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics this school year. This has built on the increasingly consistent good teaching that has developed, and the much better attitudes to learning that the school has promoted. This year, progress has been good across the school and has been particularly strong in Year 6, who are making enormous gains and filling in some crucial gaps in their previous learning. They are on track to do much better in this year's national assessments.
- The most-able pupils are achieving well because more is expected of them, they are given harder tasks and they are keen to do well. Many enjoy tackling difficult work and take a pride in their success when it comes.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress because of the carefully tailored extra support they receive. In Year 6, for example, they are making better progress than the other pupils, so that previous gaps in their attainment are closing.
- Children in the early years make good progress from starting points that are wide ranging, but are overall typical for their ages. They leave Reception with broadly average standards.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability do well. In class, they are given easier work that is nonetheless demanding for them. Extra adults often work with them, ensuring they maintain their attention, giving them extra help if needed and, crucially, challenging them to do their best. In addition, short sessions where adults give these pupils extra help targeted on their specific needs are very effective in helping their progress.
- Pupils are generally making good progress in phonics (how the different sounds in words are represented by different letter combinations) in the younger classes. However, this can vary depending on the subject knowledge of the adult they are working with. Leaders are working to improve this to ensure greater consistency in the teaching of phonics. Results in the national phonics check in Year 1 have improved considerably since the previous inspection, but still remained below average in 2015.

## Early years provision

is good

- Children start in Reception with abilities and skills that are broadly typical for their age, although they lag behind a little in early literacy skills.
- Teaching is good and enables children to make good progress. They leave Reception well prepared for Year 1. Adults prepare a wide range of activities that engage children's interest and develop their learning in a range of topics. The outside area makes strong provision for their physical development, for example, with good opportunities to run, jump and climb. This was seen during the inspection, when children undertook an 'obstacle course' with great enthusiasm.
- Adults often provide very good direct teaching to small groups, patiently explaining things and asking searching questions that extend children's thinking and develop their vocabulary. Children extended their understanding of weight, for example, using the words heavier and lighter with increasing confidence and accuracy as adults worked with groups on using scales. However, teachers do not always provide children with enough opportunities to practise what they have learned during such sessions in subsequent 'free play', after phonics teaching, for example.
- Children are safe and happy in the class and enjoy playing and learning. They get on well together, sharing their ideas enthusiastically and cooperating well in their play. They behave well and follow routines cheerfully, for example when clearing up.
- The provision is led and managed well. Improvements have been made in response to evaluation, in developing the outside area, for example. Good use is made of assessments of children's learning to prepare activities that will build on their existing understanding. Good links with parents enable children to settle in happily and promote their learning well.
- Occasionally, when all the adults are involved in direct teaching of small groups, not enough attention is paid to the children who are engaged in free play, so opportunities to extend their learning through questioning and explanations are missed.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109898
<b>Local authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008179

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Gareth Evans
<b>Headteacher</b>	Deirdre Devine
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 941 4410
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.kennetvalley.w-berks.sch.uk">www.kennetvalley.w-berks.sch.uk</a>
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	30–31 January 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is slightly below the average size for a primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to help the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British. An average proportion come from a range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.
- The school meets the current government floor targets. These are minimum expectations set for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been major disruptions to the school's staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. For a long time, the substantive headteacher was not in school. For the last five terms, the school's deputy headteacher led the school as acting headteacher. During the last school year, there were a number of changes to teaching staff, including the sudden death of the teacher in Year 2. A new, permanent headteacher took up post the week before the inspection.
- The governing body has been reconstituted since the previous inspection.
- There was a major building programme in place until recently, with new classrooms built for all classes in key stage 2.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class, as well as in several small groups around the school. They saw breaktimes and assembly, as well as observing pupils moving around the school and having lunch.
- Samples of pupils' work were analysed in books and on displays. Several pupils were heard to read.
- The team held formal meetings with staff, groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body, and a local authority adviser. Inspectors also chatted informally with staff and pupils around the school.
- The inspectors examined a variety of documents, particularly those related to safeguarding pupils, and information about their progress.
- Inspectors took note of 21 replies to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, as well as analysing the replies to the school's own recent survey of parental opinion, and 25 replies received to a survey of staff opinion.

## Inspection team

Steven Hill, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sara Benn

Ofsted Inspector



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