

Potters Gate Church of England Primary School

Potters Gate, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7BB

Inspection dates	11–12 May 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

- Since joining the school in April 2015, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought about significant improvements to the quality of education in the school.
- Leaders have raised teachers' expectations and have rapidly improved the quality of teaching through a planned programme of training and coaching.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that is at the right level for most pupils.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They work hard to reach standards that are similar to, or above, those expected for their age.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff have established a delightful environment in which children learn and flourish.
- The school provides outstanding care for pupils. Pupils know that adults take any concerns seriously and consequently they feel very safe in school. Pupils' behave well in class and when moving around the school.
- One of the strengths of the school is the way in which it promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are very aware of the school's values and ethos and take pride in being a member of this caring community.
- The curriculum is rich and inspires pupils to work hard. It is supported with trips and visits to local places of interest that add to pupils' enjoyment of school.
- School leaders and governors have a thorough knowledge of the school and have ambitious plans for development, showing the school's ability to continue to progress further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement is not yet outstanding. In mathematics, the level of challenge for the most-able pupils is not consistently high. Not all teachers have high expectations for the work they expect from pupils in class.
- Some leaders are new to their roles and do not yet keep close enough checks on pupils' progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement, by:
 - increasing the level of challenge, particularly for the most-able pupils in mathematics
 - providing reading books that are at the right level for pupils in key stage 1
 - ensuring that teachers set high expectations for the work they expect pupils to complete in class.
- Develop the skills of all new leaders so that they play a full part in raising pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought about significant improvements to all aspects of the school since the previous inspection. They have formed a highly effective partnership and know exactly where they want to bring about further improvements. They have created a delightful learning environment in which pupils make good progress owing to the high level of care and good teaching they receive.
- School leaders and governors are ambitious and have high expectations of staff, pupils and themselves. They have created a culture in which staff are enthusiastic and keen to try out new ideas that allow pupils to learn in new ways. One parent echoed the views of many by her comment, 'The rich and varied opportunities, both academic and otherwise, have stimulated and enthralled my daughter. She has particularly loved this final year with engaging and fun teaching. The leadership is strong and the whole school has a buzz of positivity, pride and inclusion.'
- The local authority has reduced the level of support they provide to the school because they are confident that school leaders and governors are capable of bringing about required improvements themselves. The school has been very responsive to the support provided.
- Although new leaders have received good-quality training and support, some have not yet had time to bring about the improvements planned across their year groups or phases. Consequently, pupils' achievement is good rather than outstanding. This is something leaders are aware of and are planning to address.
- One of the strengths of leaders is the way in which they support staff to become even better teachers. One staff member wrote, 'I have consistently received excellent training and constant support from the leadership team. It is an exciting and inspirational place to work.' Leaders visit classrooms formally as well as informally and provide teachers with advice and guidance to improve their work. Teachers appreciate this feedback knowing it will make them better teachers.
- The performance of staff is managed well. All staff have clear targets linked both to the school development plan and pupils' progress. Staff understand they are held to account for pupils' progress and that only the best teaching is rewarded.
- School leaders have introduced new systems to record and track pupils' progress. Information on progress is regularly scrutinised and so help and support can be provided at an early stage should any pupil be at risk of falling behind others. This approach has been particularly successful in ensuring that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve equally well. Discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated. Leaders are aware that the most-able pupils do not always make as much progress as they should in mathematics and this is something they are addressing.
- Leaders and governors have given careful thought to the way in which the pupil premium funding is allocated and spent. As well as providing additional help for eligible pupils in classrooms, some of the funding is used to support their social and emotional development. For example, some pupils receive help with costs of school trips and others are given help with the cost of school uniform. This helps these pupils to learn, develop and grow with confidence.
- The curriculum is lively and engaging and provides plenty of opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills when learning other subjects. Teachers make good use of the local environment to stimulate and engage pupils' interest. For example, they visit the local church, the castle and supermarket as part of the curriculum and this helps pupils to understand the purpose of learning.
- Staff ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through the curriculum and through the good range of extra-curricular activities available. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on wider issues such as democracy and freedom and as such they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy a variety of sporting activities that help them keep fit and healthy. The primary sports funding has been effectively used to improve teachers' skills. This has given them confidence in planning and teaching physical education. Some of the funding has also been used to join the local sports association so pupils can represent the school in locally organised competitive events including football, netball, athletics and swimming.
- The large majority of parents who completed the online Ofsted survey, Parent View, or who spoke to inspectors, agreed that leadership and management are good and that the school is responsive to any concerns they raise. One parent wrote: 'The headteacher has been fantastic for this school. The school is exceptionally well led and managed.'

■ The governance of the school

- Governors have provided a high level of support to school leaders to help them to bring about the necessary improvements. They have benefited from training and support to help them to become more effective. As a result, they provide a good balance between supporting school leaders and holding them to account for the quality of education provided. Governors have a greater understanding of assessment information than in the past and so they know that standards are improving and pupils are making good progress. They know that new leaders took rapid action to improve teaching and that this has raised the morale of all staff. Governors visit school regularly so they have a good understanding of how well the school runs on a day-to-day basis. They know that pupils behave well and that they are safe in school.
- Minutes from governors' meetings show that they are well organised and meet their statutory responsibilities. They work in close partnership with school leaders, demonstrating a shared vision and sense of purpose. Governors have a good range of professional skills that they use effectively to support the leadership and management of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This aspect of the school's work is given very high priority to ensure that pupils are very well looked after and safe in school. The culture and ethos promotes pupils' safety and well-being. All staff have been trained to look for signs that a pupil may be at risk from harm and records show that they follow all procedures diligently. Training for staff has focused on recent government guidelines and pupils are taught to respect everyone, regardless of background. School leaders work in close cooperation with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable receive the right support at the right time.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers are highly motivated, enthusiastic and constantly seeking new ways to improve on what they already do very well. One teacher commented: 'The leadership team has encouraged my creativity and supported new initiatives I have led. Training, support and encouragement is always available and this encourages me to strive for improvement and adventure.'
- One of the most significant improvements has been the way in which pupils' progress is monitored and recorded. This allows teachers to provide work that is at the right level for most pupils. It also allows them to intervene quickly should a pupil be at risk of falling behind.
- Teachers provide clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve their work. They check on pupils' progress during lessons and make adjustments as they go along. For some pupils this means they are provided with harder work, while for others, they are given additional guidance and support. Consequently, most pupils make good progress.
- Although the teaching of mathematics is good, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop fluency in number for the most-able pupils. Teachers do not always provide challenging activities that call for mathematical reasoning to deepen pupils' knowledge and conceptual understanding of the subject. Because of this, the most-able pupils do not make as much progress as they should in mathematics.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and so pupils are enthusiastic and want to learn. Teaching is usually brisk and lively and engages the interest of pupils. However, not all teachers give pupils clear time limits for their work. On these occasions, pupils work with less urgency and progress is slower.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge supported by recent training. This helps them to explain their subject clearly as well as equipping them with the skills to ask pupils the right sort of questions. Teachers provide pupils with plenty of opportunities to share and discuss their ideas and this supports pupils' good progress.
- In English lessons, teachers provide pupils with written examples from high-quality books to demonstrate what they want pupils to learn. This gives pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to make their writing more effective. It also helps to inspire their imaginations and stimulates them to write.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to teachers and pupils and contribute well to pupils' learning. They provide good support to pupils who have special educational needs or disability by repeating or clarifying instructions and so these pupils understand what they have to do and make good progress.
- In most classes, teachers use interesting resources to help pupils, particularly in writing, and this has led to a significant improvement in pupils' achievement. For example, classrooms have 'word mats' or lists of common spellings and punctuation. This helps pupils to write correctly as well as developing independent learning habits.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school prides itself on the high level of care it provides for pupils. Consequently, pupils feel very safe in school because they know that adults listen to them and take any concerns seriously.
- Pupils from all backgrounds get on very well together. They show respect towards the values, beliefs and cultures of those from circumstances different to their own. They have a very good awareness that not all pupils enjoy the same privileges and pupils show sensitivity and compassion when discussing issues such as fairness.
- The school provides a calm and attractive environment with displays of pupils' work reflecting the value the school places on each individual pupil. Pupils understand and adhere to the school's values and feel proud to be members of this caring community. There is a high level of respect shown between adults and pupils in school.
- The home-school link worker has been instrumental in supporting pupils and their families who have found some aspects of school difficult to manage. She has worked alongside external agencies to provide tailored support that helps them to develop the skills and confidence to join in with class and school activities.
- Pupils are very polite, courteous and helpful towards each other, adults in school and visitors. They are very proud of their school and enjoy talking about all the different activities that are available for them. They say that all pupils are treated fairly and that discrimination is not tolerated. They listen to each other and adults, showing consideration for what they have to say.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying, including that related to modern technology. However, they are adamant that it does not occur but that they would tell an adult directly should anything be of concern to them. They have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe outside school from dangers associated with roads, railways and rivers. They also have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe when using computers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. They understand the rewards system and they need few reminders about how to behave in and around the school. Very few lessons are disrupted by misbehaviour.
- The school has employed an emotional literacy support assistant (ELSA) who offers help and support to a very few pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour. She works through their problems with them until they are able to return to the classroom.
- School records show very few reported incidents relating to poor behaviour and there have been no recent exclusions. Staff implement the school's policy for behaviour consistently and so pupils fully understand their expectations.
- School leaders have taken steps to decrease the rate of persistent absence and records show this has had some success. Attendance is above average for most pupils.
- Although pupils work hard for most of the time, they occasionally lose concentration and chat for a few moments before resuming work. There are also a very few occasions when they lose concentration because the work is not challenging enough.
- Parents, staff and governors agree that pupils' behaviour is good and that they are well looked after at school.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils work hard and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Historically, their progress has been weaker in writing than in reading and mathematics. However, this gap has closed swiftly as teachers become more confident in teaching writing.
- Previous differences between groups of pupils have closed due to decisive action taken by leaders. There are regular pupil progress meetings and so those who are at risk of falling behind are quickly identified and are provided with the right support to help them catch up. However, there are times when the most-able pupils do not make enough progress, particularly in mathematics.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their different starting points. This is because provision for these pupils is good. The special educational needs leader works closely with class teachers to identify pupils who have specific weaknesses. These pupils are given extra help in class or they have tailored programmes of work to speed up their rates of progress.
- The school has been particularly successful in closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. School leaders have used the additional funding to provide disadvantaged pupils with extra support in class so they attain as well as other pupils. The most recent performance information shows that these pupils do as well as other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading and make good progress. In Year 2, they use their knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) to help them to sound out and read unfamiliar words. They talk about what they have read and recall main points. However, there are times when books selected for them are too easy and present insufficient challenge.
- By Year 6, pupils read fluently, confidently and with enjoyment. They use punctuation well to read with good expression and comment on what they have read by referring to the book. Pupils say they read widely and often in school and at home and they talk about their favourite authors and books.
- Pupils' writing has improved and is now good. Boys, as well as girls, enjoy writing in both English lessons and when learning other subjects. They write imaginatively and confidently, with a good awareness that their work will be read. For example, one pupil in Year 4 wrote in response to 'The tunnel', by Anthony Brown, 'Desperate to get to the end, she was curious to see what was on the other side.'
- Pupils make good progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. The quality of art on display is good and pupils sing very well. Their skills in history and religious education are developed effectively through activities that require them to reflect on events. For example, when studying the ancient Egyptians, pupils compared the relative powers of different gods. This work linked to the River Nile and the importance of water.

Early years provision

is good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Staff have created a delightful learning environment that is well equipped and designed for learning indoors as well as outside. Children feel safe and secure within this environment because caring adults support them very well.
- The well-planned environment helps children to develop their social and emotional skills and so become confident and self-assured. They get on well together, sharing and taking turns and cooperating with one another when selecting their own activities. They behave well because staff set clear boundaries and act as good role models for children.
- Teaching in the early years is good and this helps children to make good progress in all aspects of their development. Staff plan activities that allow children to develop curiosity, inquisitiveness and imagination. For example, during the inspection, children went on a 'bug hunt' outside to look for whatever they could find under stones, in the garden and in hedges. They took great delight in finding a wealth of small animals as they watched them creep and crawl. Adults sensitively remind them that these are living creatures and should be treated with respect. This added to children's sense of wonder.
- Adults know children well. They observe them carefully and record their progress to ensure they are on track to achieve the early learning goals. Information is used to plan activities that build on what they already know and can do. There is a good balance of activities that children choose for themselves and those that adults plan for them. However, the transition between children moving from a formal activity such as phonics to one taking place outside is sometimes untidy and some children spend time not quite knowing what to do.
- Children are well prepared for Year 1. From their different starting points, they make good progress in all aspects of their development. This is because the curriculum is carefully planned to give them a broad range of experiences that capture their interest and inspire them to learn.
- The early years leader works in close cooperation with other leaders to ensure that children get off to the best start possible. Since joining the school in September 2015, she has reorganised provision and has plans for further improvement. She has drawn together the early years staff who now work closely together as a team. They are supportive of each other as they plan learning experiences that meet the needs of children.

School details

Unique reference number	125161
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10012231

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	378
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Little
Headteacher	Jayne Venables
Telephone number	01252 715619
Website	www.potters-gate.surrey.sch.uk
Email address	info@potters-gate.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools and pupils are taught in single-age classes. Owing to an increase in pupil numbers, the school has grown in size since the previous inspection. The expansion to a two-form entry primary school will be complete by September 2017.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is lower than usual. This is additional funding provided for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is provision for children in the early years in two Reception classes.
- The school has undergone significant changes to the leadership and teaching team since the previous inspection. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2015.
- A children's centre and a care club share the school's site. These are managed by the school but did not form part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils working in 22 classes, most of which were observed jointly with school leaders. They looked at work in pupils' books and they observed pupils in school and in the playground. Inspectors attended one assembly and they listened to pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, groups of teachers and three governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also met formally and informally with pupils. The lead inspector held a discussion by telephone with a local authority adviser.
- Among the documents scrutinised were school development plans, pupils' assessment information and minutes from governors meetings. The inspectors also scrutinised attendance information and records relating to pupils' safety and behaviour.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing the 97 responses to the online Ofsted survey, Parent View. One inspector met informally with parents during the inspection. The views of staff were taken into account by analysing 20 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Joy Considine, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Bruce Waelend	Ofsted Inspector

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