

Stephen Freeman Community Primary School

Freeman Road, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 7BZ

Inspection dates

28–29 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is often not rapid enough. Many pupils do not achieve the nationally expected outcomes at the end of key stages 1 and 2.
- Teachers do not use pupils' performance information to plan work that enables effective progress for all groups of pupils.
- Those pupils who are most able are often not identified by teachers. They rarely have challenging work to extend their learning.
- Leadership of special educational needs and of curriculum subjects is variable. It often does not play a strong enough role in ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- In the early years, the leadership does not effectively monitor the progress that children make in each area of learning. Teachers do not plan well enough to ensure that children build on their existing learning.
- Attendance, particularly of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is too low.
- Governors do not hold the school fully to account. They do not carefully monitor the impact of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are disadvantaged. The monitoring of the impact of the physical education (PE) and sports premium is weak.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has identified the right priorities and is starting to act effectively on these.
- There are strong relationships between staff and pupils. The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- Leaders have built positive links with parents through good communication. All who responded to the questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - ensuring that teachers make the best use of pupils' performance information so that all groups of pupils make rapid progress
 - increasing rates of progress so more pupils are working at the expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics
 - identifying those pupils who are most able, including those who are most able and disadvantaged, and providing them with a suitable level of challenge to extend their learning.
- Improve provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities throughout the school, by:
 - targeting additional funding on improving pupils' rates of progress and outcomes
 - ensuring that leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' needs and monitor the work provided to ensure that pupils are making rapid progress.
- Develop provision for disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged, so that the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally reduces, by:
 - creating an effective pupil premium strategy which targets additional funding to address individual barriers to learning
 - ensuring that teachers precisely monitor the progress of disadvantaged pupils and provide them with the right level of work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that subject leaders play a stronger role in developing their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that the leadership in the early years carefully monitors children's progress in each area of learning and uses this to plan learning that enables rapid progress
 - improving the attendance of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by ensuring that parents are aware of the need for their child to attend regularly
 - improving the impact of governors in holding the school to account, so that they closely monitor the quality of teaching, pupils' progress and attainment, and the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, sports and special educational needs.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the school's work may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because pupils make inconsistent progress. Groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who are most able often do not have suitably challenging work. Recent changes, introduced since the arrival of the new headteacher, have had too little time to demonstrate a positive impact.
- Leadership of special educational needs is often ineffective. This is because additional funding is not used carefully enough to improve the progress and outcomes of eligible pupils. Leaders rarely monitor the work provided for these pupils. Staff sometimes lack a clear understanding of these pupils' needs, so work is often set that is not suitable. Consequently, these pupils often make slow progress.
- The school does not make the best use of the funding for disadvantaged pupils. Currently, these pupils make inconsistent progress across the school. In previous years there has been a lack of clarity regarding the link between how the funding has been spent and the impact on pupils' progress. This year, the school is still in the early stages of developing a pupil premium strategy. Leaders are still deciding how to overcome pupils' barriers to learning. They are currently unclear how they are going to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils so the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally diminishes.
- Primary PE and sports premium is often not used well enough to encourage greater participation in sports. Leaders are still in the early stages of writing and publishing a report that details how the funding for this year is to be spent.
- Those who are subject leaders are often new in post. As a result, they are not yet having a strong enough impact on progress in their subjects. While they have begun to monitor their areas of responsibility and provide teachers with valuable feedback, it is too soon to demonstrate the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.
- Since the arrival of the new headteacher there have been numerous positive changes. The curriculum has been totally redesigned. Topics now motivate and interest pupils, while ensuring that all statutory requirements are covered. Pupils learn well in science and reach standards that are slightly higher than the national average. This is because staff make good use of the well-equipped specialist classroom and provide pupils with many hands-on experiences. Walls in corridors display pupils' creative skills with paint and other materials. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. They are effectively taught debating skills. For example, when pupils had to consider arguments both for and against building a dam. Leaders provide pupils with a growing awareness of nature through various well-planned activities at the on-site forest school.
- Trips and visits form a key part of the curriculum, including residential visits to outdoor activity centres. The school ensures that pupils have a growing understanding of health matters. For example, Year 6 pupils visited a hospital and learned about cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

- Pupils say how much they enjoy the extra-curricular clubs, such as netball, choir and board games. Some pupils said they appreciated the opportunity to set up their own clubs. This has a positive impact on their personal development.
- Pupils are encouraged to learn about the British values. They are taught about tolerance and respect towards different cultures. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is well developed.
- Parents are delighted with the changes which the new headteacher has implemented. Many commented that the school feels like a different place since she took up her role two terms ago. They like the recently introduced home-learning menus. Many praise the regular communications from the school. All parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- There has been a recent review of governance that identified several improvements that needed to be made. Governors have already started to address some of these areas. However, important aspects of governance remain to be improved.
- Governors do not hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. There is no evaluation of the impact of additional funding for special educational needs, pupil premium and sports premium. Governors are often uncertain about pupils' progress and outcomes, and the quality of teaching.
- Governors are keen to improve their own performance. They plan to develop their skills to support the school more effectively. They have attended recent training and are planning more training.
- With regard to safeguarding, governance is strong. Governors are knowledgeable about all of the school's procedures and practice related to pupils' well-being. Statutory duties are diligently fulfilled.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- After the new headteacher arrived, a thorough external safeguarding audit was conducted. The few areas identified as requiring attention were rapidly addressed by both senior leaders and governors. A strong culture of safeguarding has now been established. Policies comply with statutory guidance. Procedures are thorough and ensure that pupils at this school are well cared for, and are kept safe.
- Leaders carefully follow safer recruitment procedures. Senior staff and governors are well trained. They ensure that all the appropriate checks are conducted before a new member of staff takes up their role.
- Child protection is a high priority in the school. Staff are well informed and vigilant. All staff and governors have received appropriate up-to-date training and know the signs and symptoms of abuse. Procedures are rigorously followed.
- Leaders and governors are diligent in protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremist views.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is too variable across the school.
- There is too little focus on identifying most-able pupils, including those who are most-able and disadvantaged. Teachers rarely provide suitably challenging work to enable these pupils to deepen their understanding. Some examples seen in books show that sometimes work is provided which pupils already know and understand. This slows progress.
- Teachers do not always plan learning activities that enable pupils to make rapid progress from their starting points. While staff are now accurate in knowing where a pupil is in the development of their skills, they are still in the early days of using performance information to set work at the right level of difficulty. Often work set is not appropriate, as it is either too easy or too difficult.
- Teaching is rapidly improving. Assessment is accurate and teachers are monitoring pupils' progress more rigorously. Parents report that teachers now have higher expectations about what their child can achieve. The new headteacher and staff insist on well-presented work and neat handwriting.
- Pupils say that they enjoy the recently introduced homework tasks. They say that they like researching subjects and exploring areas that they find particularly interesting.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say that they are safe and well looked after. Around the school, numerous displays show pupils' work on keeping safe when using the internet. When asked, even the youngest pupils know about the potential dangers of revealing personal information when online. Pupils are knowledgeable about keeping safe when outside. They know how to cross the road safely and about the dangers of railways.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school. Parents who were spoken to, or who responded to the questionnaire, Parent View, were mainly positive that bullying was not a problem at the school. The school's records show that there has been very little bullying over the last year.
- Pupils have a growing understanding about how to be a successful learner. They say that their teachers tell them not to give up when work seems hard. Pupils are self-confident. They are happy to express their views to the rest of the class or when showing their skills to larger audiences, such as inter-school choir events. This is due to the positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils. Staff constantly encourage pupils to 'have a go' and try different experiences.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The proportion of pupils absent from school is too high, particularly for those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders recognise the need to secure improvements and are starting to address this issue. They know that pupils must have equal access to the educational experiences offered. Leaders are currently working on ensuring that parents are well informed about the need for their child to attend regularly.
- Around the school pupils are polite and courteous. They conduct themselves well. Records show that, with very few exceptions, most pupils behave well in lessons and do not disrupt the learning of others.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils make inconsistent progress throughout the school. In 2016, a lower proportion of pupils than that seen nationally attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. This presents challenges for pupils when they leave this school and go on to access the secondary school curriculum.
- Those who are most able, including those who are most able and disadvantaged, are not reaching the standards that they are capable of achieving. In key stage 1 last year, few pupils were working at greater depth in reading and writing, and none were working at greater depth in mathematics. In key stage 2, progress was significantly slower for the most able pupils when compared to the national average. No pupils were working at greater depth in reading and writing. Currently, teachers provide too few opportunities to develop greater depth in pupils' understanding.
- Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make variable progress across the school. This has been due to some weaknesses in leadership. Teachers have not been held to account for the progress of this group of pupils. Leaders are now beginning to check their progress more regularly and are holding teachers to account. However, it is too early to judge the impact that this is having on pupils' progress.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils made significantly slower progress than the national average in writing and mathematics. As a result, these pupils did not catch up and reduce the difference between their achievement and that of other pupils nationally. There are beginning to be some promising signs of improvement, and some pupils now make good progress. However, because the pupil premium funding is not closely monitored for its effect on disadvantaged pupils' progress, the impact is still rather variable.
- In the national screening check of phonics skills in Year 1, pupils typically reached lower standards than the national average. Early signs of improvement are, however, now evident. Last year, pupils retaking the check in Year 2 performed better than the national average. The teaching of phonics has continued to improve. Teachers and learning support assistants have been well trained. This is leading to better progress.

- Work in pupils' books shows that their rate of progress is steadily increasing, particularly for those who are middle attainers. However, there remains considerable variability in the rate of progress of particular groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged, the most able, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- For the last three years, from different starting points, a lower proportion of children have reached a good level of development when compared to the national average. This has an impact on how ready children are to start Year 1.
- While leaders and managers assess children's learning when they enter the provision, these assessments are often not used effectively enough. Teachers do not ensure that they plan learning tasks in both the outside and inside environments that meet children's needs. As a result, progress is inconsistent.
- Leaders are keen to improve and have put in place several strategies to increase progress. However, sometimes these strategies have a limited effect. For example, in literacy in the Reception class.
- Those children in the early years who are disadvantaged are not making rapid enough progress. This is because additional funding is often not addressing children's individual barriers to learning.
- In both Nursery and Reception, children develop good attitudes to their learning. They behave well and show consideration for the needs of others. They follow established routines and are quick to stop what they are doing when the teacher asks them to listen.
- Children enjoy a range of interesting activities. For example, their understanding of the natural environment was carefully developed when looking at frogspawn and insects in the Nursery class.
- Parents are very supportive of the early years provision. They appreciated the care that their children received when starting school. Links with external services are good.

School details

Unique reference number	123079
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10024660

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Allum
Headteacher	Jess Butler
Telephone number	01235 814718
Website	www.stephen-freeman.oxon.sch.uk
Email address	office.2594@stephen-freeman.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about pupil premium, PE and sports premium, and the name of the phonics scheme used in key stage 1 on its website.
- Stephen Freeman Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A very large majority of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is slightly higher than that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is smaller than the national average.

- Children in the early years are taught in a part-time Nursery and two full-time Reception classes.
- Since the time of the last inspection there have been several changes. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2016. There is a new chair of the governing body and many of the governors are new. The children's centre, mentioned in the previous inspection report and which shared the same site, has recently closed.
- The school runs its own breakfast club.
- The school did meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations, in 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and looked in pupils' books in all classes. Many lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils. Inspectors also listened to some pupils reading and looked at work in books. There were also informal discussions with pupils at breaktime about what it is like to be a pupil at this school.
- Inspectors took account of 60 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors held discussions with staff about a range of subjects. There was also a meeting with the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation and policies including the school improvement plan. Information about the performance of the school in comparison with other schools nationally was considered along with documents about pupils' current attainment and progress. Documents checking the quality of teaching and learning, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding, were also examined.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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