

Symondsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Symondsbury, Bridport, Dorset DT6 6HD

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to improve outcomes for pupils have not been effective over time. Too few pupils make expected progress, especially in writing.
- Teaching is too variable. Pupils are not clear about learning outcomes in lessons; this slows their progress in lessons and over time.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do.
- Leaders' assessments of the most able pupils in writing are over generous and these pupils are not given enough challenge to make rapid progress.
- Too few pupils in key stage 2 reach higher standards in writing.
- Staff do not follow the school's assessment policy consistently. Pupils are not clear about how to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders at all levels share a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. All contribute to the actions for improvement.
- Pupils' behaviour is good; they are respectful of adults and they play safely and happily. Attendance is high and pupils are keen to come to school.
- Provision in the early years is good, and children have a positive and well-structured start to their school lives.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school. Planned activities contribute well to pupils' personal development.
- The school engages very well with the community. As a result, pupils understand their roles as young citizens and are enthusiastic about 'making the world better'.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school; they value the support and feedback they are given about their children.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress that pupils make, particularly in their writing, by:
 - ensuring that pupils know what aspects of writing they are working on throughout daily lessons
 - helping pupils be clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is good across the school by:
 - raising expectations in lessons, especially for the most able pupils
 - ensuring that the school's assessment policy is applied by all staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted quickly enough to improve the quality of education at the school since the time of the last inspection. This is particularly the case for writing. Pupils do not develop the skills they need to improve their writing so that more reach the standard expected for their age. The most able pupils are not given enough challenge and guidance to achieve higher standards in their writing.
- Leaders are determined, hardworking and passionate about their work and their school. They are committed to making the improvements necessary. However, leaders have not yet improved the quality of teaching so that it is good across the school. A new policy for assessing pupils' work is in place but it is not yet applied well enough.
- School leaders are clear about the school's weaknesses in writing and in teaching and learning. A robust and well-written development plan outlines the actions that need to be taken to improve. All staff and governors are involved in the process of development planning and understand the part they play in securing improvements.
- Training to develop the skills of some middle leaders is effective. Time is set aside for subject leaders to monitor learning in science, for example. This is leading to some recent improvements to the quality of teaching and the curriculum in this subject. However, monitoring by the leader for English is not always accurate enough to bring about the improvements needed.
- Leaders also provide good professional development for other staff. All staff said that they have appropriate support and guidance and that they are motivated and supported by the headteacher.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a clear understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. She tracks their progress carefully. Where appropriate, the school provides additional support from well-trained teaching assistants or other professionals such as speech therapists. These pupils make good progress in the school.
- A very small number of disadvantaged pupils attend this school. Leaders take time to carefully consider how the small amount of additional funding for these pupils is spent. The progress of disadvantaged pupils matches those of their peers. However, in writing these pupils do not make enough progress.
- The school works in liaison with the local authority for support and guidance. Advice about assessment in writing has not always been helpful for the school and has led to some inaccurate judgements being made. Effective work with a group of local schools is helping to secure improvement to the quality of leadership and outcomes in the early years.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is supported very well and is a strength of the school. The school's focus on developing the '6 Rs' (respect, responsibility, relationships, reflection, reaching and rejoicing) is successful in supporting pupils' personal development. Pupils are proud to receive rewards at weekly assemblies that identify what values they have achieved. Pupils also enjoy sharing celebrations such as

harvest time. A highlight of the most recent harvest celebrations was a dance in church led by the dance club. All pupils and parents took part in the dance, which demonstrated a great sense of community and shared enjoyment.

- Pupils' understand fundamental British values such as democracy. Pupils of all ages contribute to discussions such as, 'How can we help our lunch time supervisors?' Pupils' ideas are valued and taken into consideration by the leaders of the school. Studying Aboriginal art and the Chinese New Year contribute to pupils' cultural understanding well.
- Leaders' efforts to provide pupils with a wide and varied curriculum experience are highly successful and motivate pupils in their learning. Topics such as World War 2 develop pupils' sense of chronology and use of historical sources well. The taught curriculum is supported well by a wide range of visits, such as to London and a residential visit to Okehampton. Visitors to the school also support the broader curriculum. For example, an actor helped pupils in Class 3 create a 'play in a day', which enhanced their historical knowledge of the Mayan people.

Governance of the school

- Governors play a key role in the development of the school.
- Governors are well informed and know the school's strengths and weaknesses well.
- They provide challenge and support through regular meetings. However, governors' challenge has not resulted in improved outcomes for pupils, especially in writing.
- Governors appropriately oversee the headteacher in the performance management of staff and undertake the headteacher's own performance management.
- Governors use their wide range of expertise to ensure that all statutory duties are carefully met. They oversee the budget and ensure that it is spent appropriately.
- Governors' proactive role in safeguarding helps to ensure that the school has a strong culture of safety and support for all pupils. Governors play a significant role in helping the school to improve the quality of its site and buildings.
- Governors are aware that the quality of teaching and learning underpins the success of the school. They support the school's development plan and feel that the actions in place have the potential to ensure that the necessary improvements are made.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and all statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- Staff recruitment is undertaken conscientiously with due regard to safeguarding. References are sought and the appropriate checks are undertaken. When a new member of staff starts, they are given paperwork about conduct, safeguarding and health and safety. They are well prepared for their new role.
- Staff, pupils and parents know how to raise concerns. Leaders take prompt and appropriate action in these cases. Staff are aware of the government's 'Prevent' duty to

protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism.

- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in the playground and when using computers. They understand about 'stranger danger' and feel that staff are always on hand to help.
- Risk assessments are completed well. School leaders are aware of improvements that need to be made in the playground. Action has been taken to reduce risks while waiting for the work to start.
- The school undertakes regular evacuation practices that help to ensure that pupils can exit the building safely and rapidly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too inconsistent to be judged as good overall. Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils' outcomes are uneven across subjects; for example, pupils make slower progress than typically expected in writing.
- Teachers' use of assessment information is not as precise as it needs to be. The new assessment policy is not applied consistently so that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Planned writing activities do not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils. Teaching does not routinely build on what pupils know, understand and can do. This minimises pupils' chances of raising their work to a higher level. Consequently, there are not enough pupils in key stage 2 working at higher levels in writing.
- Teachers do not always engage pupils in their learning effectively. In such cases, a few pupils get confused or are unsure as to how to complete activities planned, and learning time is wasted. Similarly, some pupils do not always understand what is expected of them in lessons, which hinders their progress over time.
- Pupils are taught to read well. The percentage of pupils meeting the required standards for the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been above national averages for three years. The most able pupils read fluently. Middle-attaining pupils identify punctuation and use it to put interest and expression into their reading. Lower-ability pupils use phonics to attempt words they do not know. All pupils are keen readers and said that they are supported at home and at school. The school library has a good range of books and is an inviting place for pupils. Pupils talked with confidence about how they choose a book because they like an author, genre or series of books.
- In mathematics, planned activities develop pupils' knowledge and skills well. As a result, pupils make good progress, including the most able pupils who achieve well. Over time, teaching ensures that pupils apply their understanding to solve mathematical problems confidently.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are given good support and guidance. Their work is often personalised with extra guidance or different ways for them to present their work in place, helping them to make good progress.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There have been no recent reported incidents of bullying and most pupils typically reported, 'It doesn't happen here.' However, some younger pupils are not clear what 'bullying' means.
- Racist incidents are very infrequent. Leaders always take prompt and appropriate action if they arise.
- Pupils who have emotional and social needs are supported by well-trained staff. These pupils make great strides in their confidence and approaches to learning.
- Parents feel that their children are well cared for. The parents' survey undertaken during the inspection showed that parents feel that the school cares well for their child. Many parents also took the time to talk, and write, to the inspector. The very large majority of comments were overwhelmingly positive, such as, 'The ethos of the school builds respect and confidence in the children in equal measure and is delivered in a truly nurtured fashion, which ensures they always feel safe.'
- The breakfast club provides a safe and happy place for pupils before school. This is a recent addition to the school and is valued by parents.
- There is a range of after-school clubs. They are valued by the pupils who are proud of the many sporting events in which the school is involved.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Around the school, and out at play, pupils behave well. They regularly move from classroom to classroom, or to different learning areas around the school, in an orderly manner. Pupils hold doors open for each other and for adults.
- Pupils said that the staff 'encourage us to be kind and polite'. As a result, they have a clear sense of what is expected.
- Any minor incidents of unkind play are dealt with well. Pupils reported that staff always sort things out. Additionally, the 'peer mediators' (pupils from Year 5 and Year 6) are well trained and they are able to help their peers resolve minor disagreements.
- Attendance is good and above national averages. Pupils come to school happily and promptly.
- Pupils reported that there is some minor disruption to their learning in lessons. Typically, when activities do not challenge pupils or when teachers' instructions are not clear enough, their learning falters. Similarly, when pupils are allowed to become too noisy, they distract others' learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For two years, key stage 2 pupils have significantly underachieved in writing, and the school was in the bottom 10% for progress when compare to all pupils nationally. Pupils' progress from different starting points has not been strong enough and is only recently improving. The progress of disadvantaged pupils' in writing is significantly lower than their progress in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' assessment of the most able writers has been overgenerous. Some examples of writing by the most able pupils in Year 5 and Year 6, provided by the school, are not yet at the higher standard. Pupils' work shows they are still missing basic punctuation or spelling simple words incorrectly.
- Leaders are taking action to ensure that all teachers have a better understanding of the expectations of pupils' writing. Teachers are now scrutinising pupils' books together so they are more aware of the standards and progress expected.
- Staff and leaders are now better at identifying gaps in learning, due to the school's new tracking system. Staff and leaders meet regularly to discuss pupils who are falling behind, and more pupils than previously are making better progress. However, some are not yet catching up quickly enough.
- In mathematics, pupils make progress in line with, or slightly better than, national averages. Progress seen in pupils' books shows that most are on track to meet their targets from different starting points. A high percentage of pupils achieve better than expected standards in mathematics.
- In Year 5 and Year 6, the most able pupils are given good mathematics tasks and challenges that extend their thinking. They are encouraged to apply their skills to a variety of problems and they test out different ways of solving these. However, in younger age groups, some mathematics work set is too easy or repetitive for pupils, and progress is less strong.
- In reading, for the last two years, progress has been in line with national averages. Pupils are encouraged to read across the curriculum. For example, they read World War 1 poems in history. Current pupils enjoy reading and they talk confidently about author choices and genres.
- The percentage of pupils in Year 1 who reach the expected standard in their phonics screening check has been consistently above national averages for three years. Pupils use their good knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to read accurately.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in this school. Individual targets and, where appropriate, personalised learning activities ensure that their progress is carefully checked. The strong support from teachers and teaching assistants ensures that these pupils do well.

Early years provision

Good

- The quality of teaching and leadership in the early years is good. As a result, children make good progress from different starting points and develop a positive attitude

towards school and learning.

- Children join the school from a range of different pre-school settings and experiences. There are three sessions during the summer term when they can visit the school. School staff make home and pre-school visits where appropriate. As a result, children are confident and happy when they begin in September.
- Approximately half the children begin school with standards that are typical for Reception children. Other children are working at standards typical for children aged between three and four-year olds. Their language and communication skills are usually strong and they make quick progress.
- Adults in the early years class are well trained, caring and supportive. They are conscientious in their role of keeping these young children safe, and incidents such as head-bumps are followed up appropriately with parents.
- The classroom and outside space provide interesting, engaging and exciting opportunities for children to develop their social and emotional learning. Information gained from carefully observing and supporting children is used effectively to help them manage feelings and make friends.
- Children develop their skills in reading and writing well. Phonics is well taught and pupils learn to love stories through 'story-exercise'. Outside, children use water and paintbrushes to practise phonics. 'Dough gym' gives them chances to develop strength and dexterity, ready for writing.
- Children learn to love mathematics. Some can already recognise shapes in the playground and count beyond 20. Children's enthusiasm for numbers is extended when practical activities to build even bigger towers from blocks excite them in their learning.
- Teachers help children to learn new information about the wider world. For example, when learning historical information on a topic on bonfire night children were keen to create 'wanted' posters and talk about what Guy Fawkes did.
- The early years leader knows the children very well. Assessments are made using an online system so that parents can see what their child is achieving at school. Parents also contribute to these assessments. Parents feel that their children get a good start to their school lives.
- These young children are building resilience and determination. Many will stick at a task, even if it gets complicated.
- Through the early years, children make good progress from a range of starting points. The percentage of children who meet the early learning goals at the end of Reception is above the national average. Children are well prepared and ready to start Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	113815
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10037857

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Streatfeild
Headteacher	Emma Roberts
Telephone number	01308 423502
Website	www.symondsbury.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@Symondsbury.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16– 17 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Symondsbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a smaller than average-size primary school. It caters for 109 pupils in Reception through to Year 6, organised in four mixed-age classes.
- The number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average.
- The number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic groups.
- The school provides before-school care.

- Eighty-four percent of pupils attending this school do not come from within the local catchment area.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher throughout the inspection. She also met the science and literacy leader and the SENCo. She had telephone conversations with a local authority representative and the school's education partner. The inspector met a group of four governors.
- The inspector observed learning and teaching in a number of lessons across the school. Several observations were carried out alongside the headteacher.
- The inspector observed behaviour in lessons, in assembly and at play. She spent a short time in the breakfast club and observed visiting teachers.
- The inspector scrutinised assessment information provided by the school and its published assessment information from recent years. She looked at a range of evidence, including behaviour logs, attendance information, SEN and disability information and procedures for safeguarding.
- She considered the school's self-evaluation and its current development plan, alongside governors' minutes and anonymised performance management reports.
- The inspector examined pupils' work from September 2017 and from previous academic years. She also took into account other assessment information in the early years and work on display around the school.
- The inspector spoke with a number of pupils from across the school. Some were selected to give the inspector a tour of the school and others were spoken to informally at playtime or lunch or between lessons. The inspector listened to pupils read and observed a 'pupil voice' session.
- The inspector took into account the comments made by parents. She met many parents after school and received written letters from some. Thirty responses on Parent View were taken into consideration.
- The inspector considered the views of staff expressed in conversations and meetings. She also considered their comments from the staff survey.

Inspection team

Liz Wilson-Chalon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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