

Powerstock Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Powerstock, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3TB

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, ably supported by a dedicated and highly skilled team of staff and governors, has a clear vision for the school. She communicates this with clarity, and there is a shared moral purpose to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas which need further improvement. Priorities for school development are appropriate, but plans lack the precision required to allow leaders to accurately measure the success that their actions are having on raising pupils' outcomes.
- Teachers plan lessons which engage, enthuse and motivate pupils. They skilfully build on pupils' prior knowledge and skills to ensure that they make strong progress in subjects across the curriculum.
- The school's focus on developing pupils' grasp of number and calculation is having a positive impact on pupils' mathematical abilities. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply their understanding. Similarly, although pupils are able to apply their strong knowledge of phonics, spelling remains an area for leaders to develop further.
- Although attendance remains below the national average, leaders' actions are reducing levels of absence and persistent absence for all pupils, and especially the school's most vulnerable pupils.
- In the early years, children make a strong start to their learning from a wide variety of different starting points. Early years provision is good and pupils develop their skills and knowledge across the different areas of learning. However, opportunities for children to practise their writing skills independently are more limited.
- Leaders' actions to promote pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Leaders, staff and governors know each pupil extremely well and tailor support precisely to meet pupils' needs. They ensure that any barriers to learning are reduced or, where possible, removed entirely.
- Safeguarding is effective. However, governors' strategic oversight of the school's safeguarding procedures lack rigour.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many have chosen it specifically for its caring, nurturing ethos and are pleased with the provision their children receive.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' outcomes and raise attainment by:
 - embedding the work done on mathematical fluency and developing opportunities for pupils to reason and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills
 - embedding the systems to develop pupils' spelling so that they can apply their strong phonic awareness and use known words in their writing
 - providing more opportunities for younger pupils to practise their writing skills in a range of contexts.
- Further strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing a system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress that more accurately meets the needs of the school and its pupils
 - ensuring that development planning focuses precisely on the impact that actions are expected to have on raising pupils' outcomes
 - developing governors' strategic oversight of safeguarding by adding additional rigour to their monitoring of the school's procedures.
- Continue to raise the attendance for all pupils in the school, and especially those with persistently high rates of absence.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads the school with conviction, passion and high expectations for all members of the school community. This, combined with her ability to inspire pupils and staff, is leading to improving outcomes for pupils of all ages and prior attainment.
- Leaders know their pupils exceptionally well. They constantly discuss pupils' strengths and vulnerabilities with teachers, support staff and parents so that they can tailor the school's provision and ensure that it meets pupils' needs. This includes curriculum planning as well as an extensive programme of support, care and guidance. As a result, pupils are ready to learn and, consequently, make strong progress towards their academic and pastoral targets.
- The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas which require further development. Priorities in the school's development plan, such as developing pupils' understanding of number and further improving pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation skills, are appropriate. However, the measures by which the success of actions will be assessed lack precision. Similarly, success criteria often focus on the differences that will be seen in provision rather than the impact that these differences will have on pupils' outcomes. This is limiting the effectiveness with which leaders and governors can monitor the success of their plans and hold staff and leaders to account for their actions.
- The headteacher's monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and rooted in high expectations for staff and pupils. She encourages staff to take risks to develop their practice, and they feel safe and sufficiently supported to do so. Staff use the detailed development points from monitoring to improve outcomes for pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- The headteacher and staff monitor pupils' progress with care and precision. They have a detailed knowledge of what pupils can do and what they need to do next. Where pupils are at risk of falling behind, leaders put interventions in place to address gaps in pupils' learning. However, leaders recognise that for pupils who have more complex needs their current system does not allow them to keep track of the success that the school has in improving aspects of pupils' personal development such as independence, resilience and self-esteem.
- The school has established effective systems for managing the performance of staff. The headteacher holds staff to account for pupils' outcomes as well as their own professional development. Although resources are limited, the headteacher ensures that staff receive the training appropriate to their needs. This is done through the local authority and in partnership with the West Dorset Schools' Collaboration, of which the school is an active member.
- The headteacher, supported by governors, has made some difficult decisions about the school's leadership and staffing structure. This has been done skilfully with high levels of staff morale being maintained.
- Leaders and governors are proactive in looking at ways to reduce the school's

vulnerabilities and help safeguard its future. For example, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to secure transport to enable pupils to attend. Similarly, governors are working extensively to explore more collaborative and efficient ways of working with other local schools.

- Leaders have skilfully tailored the school's curriculum so that it meets the needs of their pupils. In addition to providing engaging activities across a breadth of subjects, a focus on outdoor learning is developing pupils' skills in areas such as self-esteem, confidence and the ability to work collaboratively, which underpin their academic learning. The school has also engaged with the local community to support its curriculum offer and uses local 'experts' to enthuse pupils and give their learning real-life purpose.
- Leaders ensure that they use additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, effectively to support their learning. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a detailed understanding of the barriers pupils face in their learning and plans provision to reduce these as much as possible. As a result of high-quality teaching, which is matched to pupils' needs, pupils eligible for additional funding make good progress towards their academic and/or personal targets.
- The leader responsible for physical education (PE) continues to ensure that the sport premium grant is used well. This has led to increased participation in PE lessons and extra-curricular activities, for example, the family fitness club. A large number of pupils have also benefited from the opportunity to represent the school in competitive sport. Staff have also developed their skills through working alongside external sports coaches.
- Leaders and teachers actively promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In an assembly on lying, pupils were encouraged to reflect on the consequences of not telling the truth, both for themselves and others. A younger pupil explained that 'lying makes your problems bigger'.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the lengths to which leaders and staff go to support their children. One parent, summing up the view of many parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, wrote, 'A very happy environment for my child to learn in whilst all being part of one big family.' Another parent wrote, 'The school is a friendly, supportive environment, where each child is valued and is nurtured to reach their potential.' One more stated, 'Simply put, my son is thriving at this school and I am proud to tell people he attends this school.'

Governance of the school

- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They visit the school regularly and, through their links with a specific subject or a priority in the school's development plan, produce focused reports on the effectiveness of the school's work. Governors are skilled at using first-hand information to check the information they are given by school leaders. However, although safeguarding in the school is effective, governors do not have a detailed strategic oversight of the school's procedures.

- The headteacher provides governors with regular information about pupils' outcomes in a format which they can understand. Minutes of governors' meetings show that they question any weaknesses in assessment information so lessons can be learned and priorities added to development planning.
- Governors have secure systems for holding the headteacher to account for the school's performance and receive external validation from a variety of sources. This includes the local authority and other headteachers from across the collaboration. However, governors recognise that a lack of precision in relation to targets in the school's development planning limits their ability to challenge the headteacher with a sufficient level of rigour.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher, who is also the designated leader for safeguarding, is an ardent advocate for keeping pupils safe. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All members of the community understand that it is everyone's responsibility to be vigilant and, as a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- A proactive approach to safeguarding ensures that staff, volunteers and visitors understand the school's policies and procedures. Training is up to date, and staff have a good understanding of the 'Prevent' duty as well as areas such as female genital mutilation, sexting and the risks associated with children missing from education. Record-keeping is thorough, and the checks made to ensure that everyone is suitable to work with children are appropriate and well documented.
- Staff have built strong relationships with parents and ensure that, where necessary, they can work collaboratively to safeguard vulnerable pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The work in pupils' books and observations of learning carried out during the inspection show that teachers have a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. They make effective use of the assessment information and plan activities that are well matched to pupils' next steps of learning. This consolidates pupils' knowledge and skills and, when appropriate, develops them further.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use questioning skilfully to explore pupils' understanding and deepen their learning. Where necessary, teachers model activities so that all pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is a strength of the school and this is reflected in pupils' outcomes. The school has ensured that pupils have access to high-quality texts, which expose them to a broad range of vocabulary. Pupils read confidently and with increasing levels of fluency and comprehension. They ably use their knowledge of phonics to assist them when faced with unfamiliar words.
- A sharp focus on developing pupils' basic literacy skills is clearly helping pupils of all abilities to improve their writing. Grammar and punctuation are taught effectively, and

pupils apply these skills well in their writing. They understand the effect that the use of language and punctuation can have on the reader. One pupil explained to the inspector how she had used a semi-colon instead of a full stop in order to separate her ideas, while maintaining the length of her sentence. Another pupil was using a thesaurus to rewrite his opening sentence. He explained that this was to give it more impact and to better engage the reader.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' writing and encourage them to write about their experiences. For example, younger children were writing about the recent visit of the 'life bus' and what they had learned about healthy eating. Opportunities for younger pupils to practise their early writing skills independently are, however, more limited.
- Although pupils are able to use their knowledge of phonics to aid them in spelling unfamiliar words, as spellings become more complex so the accuracy of spelling decreases. Leaders recognise the need to develop pupils' knowledge of spelling strategies beyond phonics. This is a priority for the school.
- The school's focus on developing mathematical fluency is proving effective. Work in books demonstrates that pupils have a more secure grasp of number and calculation. This is leading to improved outcomes and raised levels of confidence. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to reason. However, pupils are often required to spend time unnecessarily practising the fluency skills they have already grasped, rather than deepening their understanding by applying these skills in a range of contexts.
- Pupils benefit from a curriculum which is engaging and enjoyable and develops their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects. As one pupil told the inspector, 'Teachers help us learn in a fun way.' Teachers use members of the local community to provide pupils with 'expert' advice. For example, pupils have visited a tree-feller and a furniture maker as a stimulus for writing newspaper articles and, during the inspection, an advertising executive spoke to pupils about how to use emotive language and images to develop persuasive writing.
- Through the school's curriculum, teachers promote creativity, and pupils are able to talk articulately about their work. For example, one boy in key stage 2 described how, in his abstract art depicting the Easter story, he had used different colours and shapes to represent happiness and sadness. Similarly, younger pupils had made a pictorial representation of the 'healthy eating triangle' out of plastic fruit and wooden building blocks. They were able to describe what they had done, as well as the importance of healthy eating.
- Teachers plan cross-curricular opportunities and activities which give pupils' learning a real purpose. For example, Year 6 boys enthusiastically described their mathematics project, measuring the impact that the school's daily mile is having on levels of fitness in the school.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Leaders and staff work hard to ensure that they have a deep understanding of their pupils and know each child as an individual. They talk knowledgeably about what helps pupils learn and how best to overcome any difficulties that pupils may have. A main priority for the school continues to be getting pupils ready to learn and instilling in them a 'can-do' attitude. This is evident throughout the school and, in particular, when talking to pupils about their learning.
- In partnership with other schools, leaders have ensured that pupils have access to 1:1 counselling sessions, where required. This is proving effective in supporting pupils' mental well-being and further reducing barriers to learning, for example, in cases of anxiety.
- Parents recognise that the school frequently goes the 'extra mile' to support their children. As one parent said, 'Despite differing needs and abilities, the individual attention my children receive at this school, both academically and emotionally, is exceptional. The impact of this can be seen in their academic progress and their personal development. It feels very much like staff, parents and the wider school community work in partnership to ensure that each pupil fulfils their potential.'
- All of the pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they feel safe in the school. They said that bullying very rarely happens but, when pupils do have a falling out, they would trust any adult in the school to help them to sort out their difficulties. This view is shared by the vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Pupils exhibit a secure understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, they know not to share personal information with strangers. Pupils were also very clear that if they had any concerns, they would talk to a trusted adult, either in school or at home.
- The school actively promotes British values. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the importance of respect and fairness. They can also describe the role of democracy in the school, for example in electing school councillors and choosing the school's charity. Work in books and discussions with pupils demonstrate their understanding of other faiths and cultures, for example, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders' actions to develop pupils' learning behaviours permeate the school at all levels. Pupils are conscientious and show pride in their work and in their school. During the inspection, pupils spoke to the inspector with great enthusiasm. They were keen to share their learning and discuss the ways in which teachers and other adults support them.

- Pupils' conduct around the school and at lunch and breaktimes is excellent. Pupils described the school as one big happy family. Older pupils engage fully with the younger ones, helping them and involving them in their play.
- Attendance is still below average but is showing improvement and getting closer to national comparators. The headteacher is proactive in following up cases of persistent absence, and the reasons for these are well documented. This information shows that the school's overall figures are affected by the low attendance of a small minority of pupils. Leaders have engaged the services of outside agencies to minimise absence, challenging and supporting parents as appropriate.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disability is well above that found nationally. As a result, overall attainment figures for pupils are below national averages. This is the case across the school, particularly at the end of key stage 2. However, work in pupils' books demonstrates that the large majority of pupils currently in the school are making progress which is at least comparable with that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- In 2017, published assessment data for the end of key stage 2 showed that pupils' overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with that found nationally. Although detailed analysis of this information shows that some pupils made less progress than was expected of them, these pupils joined the school towards the end of key stage 2. Assessment information provided by the school shows that these pupils made good progress from their entry points into school.
- At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average. The proportion of pupils assessed as working at greater depth was also below the national average. However, their progress was at least in line with that of pupils nationally with similar attainment at the end of Reception. This is supported by the work seen in pupils' books.
- The teaching of phonics is effective, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. In 2017, all pupils in Year 1 were assessed as meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- In the early years, children make good progress from their entry points into school. All children make the progress which is expected of them, and a number of children exceed this.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. For pupils who have an education, health and care plan, this progress is often demonstrable in the development of the skills they require to become successful learners.
- As a result of the school's approach to learning, and an insistence that all pupils develop the skills they require to succeed, pupils at the end of each key stage are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

School details

Unique reference number	113812
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10048164

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	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Ware
Headteacher	Louise Greenham
Telephone number	01308 485380
Website	www.powerstock.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@powerstock.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2014

Information about this school

- Powerstock Church of England VA Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school. There are three mixed-age classes – a Years 5/6 class, a Years 3/4 class and an early years/key stage 1 class.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British, and the proportion that speaks English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The school has a higher-than-average level of mobility. A number of pupils join and leave the school at times other than the beginning of the academic year.

- The school is a member of the West Dorset Schools' Collaboration.
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection of religious education took place in December 2016.
- The government's floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6, is not applicable due to the small number of pupils in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited classrooms with the headteacher in order to observe pupils' learning.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The inspector also took into account responses to questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.
- The inspector looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. He also considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and listened to a selection of them read.
- The inspector took account of 20 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a number of free-text responses. He also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonathan Dyer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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