

St Helen's Church of England Primary School

Greenhill, Alveston, South Gloucestershire, BS35 2QX

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 classes make slower progress than they should in mathematics. This is particularly true for pupils who have special educational needs as well as those who receive extra funding to help them do well.
- The school's leaders do not track pupils' progress effectively. Leaders are then slow to spot pupils who are falling behind so that too much ground has to be made up in Year 6.
- Leaders do not focus enough on the quality of learning for all pupils when they assess teaching.
- Middle leaders lack experience in driving improvements in their subjects. Actions are being put into place to speed up progress. However, leaders, including the governing body, are not regularly checking if these actions are making a difference to the progress pupils make.
- The quality of teaching varies across the school. The work teachers plan is not always set at the right level to ensure that pupils' learning is good. This is especially the case for more-able pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils say they enjoy school very much. They are polite and respectful to adults and to each other.
- Pupils feel safe and are keen to arrive on time for school each day. Attendance is above average.
- The staff are proud to work at the school and eager to improve their own practice so they provide the best for all pupils.
- The school has the confidence of parents and carers. Attendance at parents' evenings is particularly high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They observed 14 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, staff, governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of 44 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's plan for improvement, information on individual pupils' progress, records on behaviour and safety, teachers' plans, pupils' books and the minutes of the governing body.
- They heard a sample of pupils read from Years 2 and Years 6.
- Inspectors observed behaviour on the playground, around the school, in classrooms and in a whole-school singing assembly.
- Inspectors observed the breakfast club run by the school.

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Margaret Dickinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an averaged-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who receive extra help with their learning (school action) is below average. The proportion who need a greater level of support (school action plus) or who have a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is below average.
- The school has a breakfast club, which is run by the school. The after-school club is not managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' progress, especially in mathematics in Key Stage 2, by:
 - using assessment information to plan lessons which match the pupils' needs more precisely
 - ensuring activities challenge and interest all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those that are of higher ability
 - consistently providing feedback through effective marking so pupils know what they have to do to improve
 - giving time for pupils to work independently to extend their learning
 - making sure teachers use a wide range of approaches when asking questions.
- Ensure all leaders, especially those paid at the higher rates, contribute more effectively to improving the school, particularly pupils' progress, by:
 - refining the school's current systems for analysing pupils' attainment and progress so leaders clearly know how well the school is doing and can identify what needs to be put right
 - strengthening the role of the deputy headteacher in contributing to the strategic direction of the school
 - training subject leaders to use assessment information more effectively so they can check the progress of all pupils in English and mathematics
 - building the capacity of all school leaders so they can accurately analyse the progress of the different groups of pupils and check if actions taken have made a difference
 - making sure leaders judge the quality of pupils' learning when they check teaching.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:
 - undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved
 - ensuring governors develop the right skills to check how well the school is doing so that they can hold leaders to account rigorously for its performance
 - checking that the extra funding the school receives for certain pupils is making a positive difference to their learning
 - ensuring all safeguarding training is up to date, the school keeps a clear record of who is trained, and when, and related policies are regularly reviewed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 requires improvement because teaching over time has not been good enough and too much catching up has to take place in Year 6. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics is also not high enough.
- Girls make less progress than boys in mathematics. The school has recognised this and is putting positive actions into place. Questions are being clearly directed to girls to check their understanding and booster groups for girls, involving their parents, are in place. Work in pupils' books shows progress is being made, although some pupils still have not yet caught up.
- The school is focused on improving problem solving to develop mathematical thinking and reasoning skills. Ambitious individual targets for pupils are now in place and teachers are becoming more aware of the need to plan work which closely matches pupils' needs. This is particularly true in providing the challenge for the more-able pupils.
- Children start school with skills below the expected levels for their age, particularly in writing and reading. They make good progress as they move through the Reception class. Children enjoy a range of activities and are encouraged to develop their independence through choosing their own activities. By the time they move to Year 1, children are above the levels expected for this age.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is well above average by the end of Year 2 as pupils are benefiting from good teaching. Attainment is not as high by Year 6, being above average in reading and writing and average in mathematics.
- Pupils read well and enjoy reading. They are taught how to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to read difficult words. Some reading lessons are less successful when the teacher is trying to meet the needs of a large number of pupils without other adult support.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make uneven progress in Years 3 to 6. The school organises a range of extra support, some of which is taught by teaching assistants, but leaders are not checking that this support is making a difference.
- The gap in attainment between those pupils supported by additional funding and those who are not is narrower than that found nationally. Progress for these pupils is not consistent enough to be good as, typically, they make steady rather than good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not bringing about good progress for all groups. This is particularly true in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is variable across the school. In the more effective teaching, teachers use information about individual pupils' progress well and plan work which challenges pupils and builds on what they already know. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked together to solve problems involving ratio and proportion, applying their mathematical knowledge to answer the question correctly.
- Where learning is less effective, teachers talk for too long and some pupils begin to lose interest. The questions teachers ask do not always challenge the pupils to think for themselves and they are not asked often enough to share and explain their ideas at length. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are sometimes too low. Pupils then find the work too easy and their enthusiasm for learning begins to be lost.
- Marking does not always tell pupils what they need to do to make their work better. Teachers' comments tend to focus on pupils' presentation rather than setting out what pupils need to do to extend understanding and thinking. The school has introduced 'pink for think', which is encouraging pupils to correct work independently. This is a positive step. Pupils clearly enjoy the opportunity to improve their work and take great pride in reaching the termly targets set for

them.

- Teaching in Reception successfully promotes positive relationships in the classroom. Children have plenty of opportunities to choose activities and explore their own ideas through play. This develops their curiosity and natural enthusiasm effectively.
- Pupils who need extra help receive good support in lessons. Teaching assistants know the pupils well and deal sensitively with their different needs. Teachers plan work for them but do not always check that supported pupils are making sufficient progress during lessons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through history and geography projects. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said they enjoy learning about the rainforest and its importance for our environment. Pupils in Year 3 sensitively researched the life of Anne Frank as part of their Second World War topic.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. They welcome visitors to their school and talk enthusiastically about the subjects and topics they enjoy, such as their art lessons.
- Pupils say bullying is rare. They are confident that if this were to happen, the headteacher would 'sort it out'. The school's records of any unacceptable behaviour shows that swift action is taken by school leaders so that pupils feel listened to and valued. The number of recorded incidents has fallen sharply this year. Parents and staff agree with this view.
- Pupils behave well in lessons. This is particularly the case when lessons are interesting and engaging. They settle quickly and persevere with tasks set. For example, pupils in Year 3 successfully wrote a setting for their Greek myth using descriptive vocabulary and correct punctuation. They delighted in reading their work out aloud to the class.
- In less interesting lessons, pupils can lose this love of learning and become restless. They then do not work as hard as they could which limits the progress they make.
- Attendance continues to improve. The school has worked hard to improve the attendance of a very small number of pupils. Their learning and progress are now showing improvement.
- Behaviour at playtimes and at lunchtimes is good. The school has bought a range of equipment which enables pupils to learn to play together well.
- Pupils in Year 6 benefit from a week-long residential visit at the start of the school year. This team-building experience helps pupils develop independence in readiness for the next stage of their education.
- Behaviour in physical education lessons taught by specialist coaches is good. Pupils in Year 1 concentrated very hard to improve their balances and persevered with the task. Pupils in Year 3 listened carefully to instructions in their hockey skills session and followed the important safety rules.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, typically, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are not good enough, particularly in mathematics. Leaders, including governors, know what needs to be improved. However, the systems the school has in place for checking all pupils are making good progress are not secure. This means that leaders do not have a clear enough picture of achievement across the school.
- Plans for improvement are in place but are not sufficiently detailed to bring about the improvements needed, particularly for individuals and groups of pupils who are falling behind or making steady rather than good progress. It is not clear who is responsible for checking whether the planned actions taken are making a difference.
- School leaders are hard working. All staff share in the headteacher's belief in providing care and support for every child. However, the urgency and rigour in addressing the school's main

priorities are missing. The headteacher and leaders over time have not checked the progress that different groups of pupils make in mathematics carefully enough. As a result, the leadership team has been too slow in identifying and tackling underachievement in key subjects.

- Subject leaders have introduced new ways of assessing pupils' progress more often. Teachers now set ambitious targets for all pupils to speed up progress, although it is too early to see the difference this is having on pupils' progress.
- Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is currently being undertaken by the headteacher so that the very good progress seen over time continues.
- The school has a number of teachers who are paid high salaries, including the deputy headteacher. Their roles and responsibilities in bringing about rapid improvements are unclear. The targets set for them by the headteacher are not as effective as they should be so that they can have a strong impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits to places of interest, including the theatre to support their learning across the curriculum. The school employs a specialist music teacher and sports coaches. Pupils say they enjoy these lessons. These experiences provide well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this school. It is currently supporting the mathematics subject leader to improve progress in this subject.
- Pupils learn about other religions and faiths in religious education. However, in discussions, pupils were less sure about their places of worship.
- The school is committed to keeping all pupils safe. Inspectors have given the school guidance in improving their practice. The school is acting quickly to plan training for new staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the school's main areas for improvement. Governors are aware of the inconsistencies in progress in mathematics. However, they do not have a detailed understanding of the variation in achievement between subjects and year groups and the effect of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching over time on pupils' progress. Currently, governors do not rigorously hold school leaders to account by asking challenging questions or by checking that plans in place to bring about improvements are making a difference. Governors rely too heavily on information given to them by the headteacher rather than checking for themselves. Governors know how the extra money is spent for the pupils eligible for additional funding. However, they are not checking if this support is speeding up pupils' progress and making enough difference to their achievement. Governors ensure that arrangements for keeping pupils safe are met. However, the arrangements for making sure that all staff have up-to-date training for child protection are too lax.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	109158
Local authority	South Gloucestershire
Inspection number	403080

This inspection of the school 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	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Doreen Gale
Headteacher	Jonathan Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 November 2007
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