

Northaw Church of England Primary School

Vineyards Road, Northaw, Potters Bar, EN6 4PB

Inspection dates 9–10 October 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. It does not ensure that all pupils make good progress year on year, especially in mathematics.
- Progress is slower in mathematics than in reading and writing in Key Stage 2 because teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to improve their calculating and problem-solving skills.
- Teachers do not always set tasks that are demanding enough for all pupils, especially the more-able.
- Marking does not always help pupils to improve their work and they do not always have the opportunity to act on teachers' comments.
- Not all leaders use information on pupils' achievement well to tell them how effective teaching and learning are and what aspects need to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving after a period of instability and underperformance. Leaders and governors work closely together and leadership and management are now good.
- Last year, improved leadership and management supported pupils' good progress in reading and writing. They reached higher than average standards in these areas by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Provision for Nursery and Reception children is good and helps them to make rapid progress from starting points that are below the expected level.
- Close links with the church and local community have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. They help them to grow up as considerate and responsible citizens.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, of which five were joint observations with the headteacher. The inspector also heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school's staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and another member, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of 43 responses on the online questionnaire (Parent View) that were received during the inspection, results of a parental survey carried out by the school, and 14 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire. She spoke with parents and carers during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, school improvement planning, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in four mixed-age classes. These are for Nursery- and Reception-age children, and for pupils in Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. There are small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and a few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant changes to the structure of the senior leadership team and the governing body in the past two years. The headteacher joined the school in September 2011 and there are new leaders for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The school has experienced many staff changes in the past year. Three out of four class teachers joined the school in September 2013.
- The governing body has been restructured to improve its effectiveness. The Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in June 2010, near to the retirement of the previous headteacher. Most of the members of the governing body are fairly new, having joined over the past two years.
- The school is a member of the local small schools consortium which includes several primary schools, an academy and a secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress so that they are at least good in all classes by:
 - making sure that all tasks set in lessons take into account what pupils can already do and are sufficiently demanding for pupils of all abilities, particularly the more-able
 - making sure that marking gives all pupils clear guidance on the next steps in their learning, and that they are given the opportunity to act upon it.
- Speed up pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - implementing the new calculation policy to improve pupils' calculation and problem-solving skills
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all leaders, including those who are new to their posts, receive training and support in the use and interpretation of data to track pupils' progress and identify what aspects of teaching and learning needs to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment dipped from its above-average position at the time of the previous inspection and remained broadly average in both key stages until recently. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics was not fast enough and boys were underachieving in comparison to girls.
- While achievement has improved over the past year, especially in English, achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 2 still requires improvement. Pupils' calculation and problem-solving skills are not sufficiently well developed and are not widely enough used.
- In the past year, pupils in Key Stage 2 have made more than expected progress in reading and writing and their attainment is above average in these areas. More-able pupils are now achieving higher standards than previously. Pupils made faster progress in all areas in Key Stage 1 leading to higher-than-average attainment in these subjects.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those typical for their age. They make good progress because staff plan a wide range of activities that they enjoy and engage them well in learning. Consequently, by the end of their Reception year, most children achieve the expected goals in all areas of learning.
- Pupils enjoy reading and learn to read effectively. Results of the Year 1 check on how well pupils link letters and sounds (phonics) improved in 2013 and were well above average. During the inspection, younger pupils showed they can use their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils are gaining an increasing understanding of different styles of writing and are keen to discuss their favourite characters.
- The 2013 English national test results at Key Stage 2 show that boys are now achieving as well as the girls because of the new initiatives to speed up their progress in reading and writing. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different ethnic groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress and achieve standards comparable to those of their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with specific social and emotional needs, make similar progress to others. This is because they are supported increasingly well in one-to-one and small-group sessions which helps them learn effectively.
- The support for pupils eligible for the pupil premium has improved over the past year. A range of effective interventions help pupils on an individual basis. Consequently, most of these pupils have made faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics than previously, narrowing the gap in attainment between them and their classmates. There has been too small a number of pupils in Year 6 in the past two years to accurately judge the gap in attainment between those eligible for the pupil premium and others. However, taking account of pupils' rate of progress in other year groups, the gap is narrowing rapidly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not ensure that pupils achieve well enough and acquire all the key skills necessary for good progress in mathematics. Although teaching is improving, it is not yet resulting in consistently good achievement in all subjects throughout the school.

- Teachers do not always have high expectations of how much progress pupils can make in lessons. Work is not consistently well matched to the learning needs of all pupils and teachers do not always demand enough of pupils so they learn and move on quickly. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could, especially the more-able and in mathematics.
- Marking is regular but the comments teachers write on pupils' work do not always help them to improve it. Teachers do not ensure that pupils are given time to act upon the guidance and so pupils do not always respond to it.
- There is a positive climate for learning in lessons and pupils respond readily to tasks, showing interest and enthusiasm. Relationships are good and behaviour is managed well in all classes. In most lessons, the teaching assistants are used effectively to give pupils the help they need to improve their work.
- Where teaching is good pupils learn rapidly. In the better lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge and use effective questioning to check on pupils' understanding and build on what they already know. For example, in a good literacy lesson in Year 6, the teacher used demanding questioning to make sure that pupils understood the key features and the appropriate use of language to improve their creative writing.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers use a consistent method so that pupils can build on what they are learning from week to week. This has led to marked improvement in pupils' reading skills over the past year.
- In the Nursery and Reception class, children are helped to engage in activities of their own choice as well as those directed by adults. They enjoy using their developing knowledge of phonics to help them read new words. Outdoor activities are used effectively to extend and reinforce learning in all areas.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school. Pupils are courteous to and respectful of each other and adults. They are well mannered and get on well with learning in lessons without disruption. They try hard and usually concentrate well, although they sometimes lose focus when lesson activities are not demanding enough.
- Pupils behave well and grow up as mature and confident learners. There are good procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour. These are applied consistently and pupils respond well to them. Pupils thrive in the school's inclusive atmosphere where everyone is valued regardless of their background or circumstances.
- Pupils feel safe at school and almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet or on the road, and in case of fire. They are considerate and concerned about the safety of others because these issues are often included in lessons and in the school's work with parents and carers.
- Pupils are proud of their school and appreciate that staff support and care for them. They say that there is very little bullying in the school. They are confident that if it did occur it would be dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils show a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including name-calling, racism and cyber-bullying.

- Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities. Year 6 pupils help the Nursery and Reception children during lunchtime and read stories with them. House captains are well involved in organising events such as the International Day and in activities to raise funds for charities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, together with other senior leaders and governors, communicates high expectations and is successfully driving improvement. The relatively new leadership team has taken effective action to improve teaching and pupils' achievement, especially in reading and writing. Consequently, achievement has improved over the past year.
- Since her arrival, the headteacher has successfully established effective new systems which are helping the school to operate efficiently. The new leaders, including the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, are determined to improve the quality of teaching and to speed up pupils' progress. Nevertheless, their roles in checking on the effectiveness of teaching by analysing and tracking pupils' progress are under-developed.
- The headteacher checks regularly on the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress. Teachers receive good opportunities for professional development and the headteacher sets teachers on-going demanding targets for improvement, linked closely to the attainment and progress of pupils in the class that they teach. Teachers understand the link between their performance and rates of pay.
- Pupils' enjoyment of learning is enhanced by a range of clubs and visits to places of interest. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through assemblies, religious studies and topic work. For example, Africa Day deepened pupils' understanding of music, cultures and the geographical and economic features of different parts of Africa.
- Pupils benefit from the close family-like atmosphere in which discrimination is not tolerated and good relationships abound. Close links with the church and locality help pupils to become part of, and contribute to the local community.
- The school has plans to improve the play equipment for the children in the Nursery and Reception class over the next two terms using the new primary school sports funding. It has not received this funding yet.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the school which has helped it to improve. Leaders and governors have worked well with the local authority to achieve this.
- Parents and carers are given good support on how they can help their children's learning at home through a range of information evenings and newsletters.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors visit the school regularly to gain first-hand knowledge of teaching and learning. They have a good understanding of how well pupils are progressing and the effectiveness of teaching. The governors have received appropriate training and are involved well in all aspects of the school's work. They challenge leaders and ask searching questions about how any underperformance in teaching and in pupils' achievement is tackled. Governors are aware of the results pupils attain in national tests and how they compare nationally. They set challenging targets for the headteacher and understand how each member of staff is paid according to their performance and progress towards their targets. The governing body

monitors the allocation and impact of pupil premium funds rigorously, ensuring that it is used to raise the attainment of these particular pupils. Safeguarding requirements are met.

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	117569
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	427377

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs Alis Rocca
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2009
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