

Kimbolton St James CofE Primary School

Kimbolton, Leominster, HR6 0HQ

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress in all classes.
- Pupils make exceptionally good progress in reading, and standards are typically above average in English at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Reception Year make very good use of the outdoor environment and enjoy a stimulating range of activities.
- Teachers know their pupils well and provide good additional support for any who are in danger of falling behind.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Excellent relationships and the family atmosphere contribute well to the good learning environment.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils feel very safe in school.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in well-above-average attendance.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed.
- The school provides an interesting and varied curriculum.
- Good leadership has improved procedures for keeping a check on the quality of teaching and how well pupils are achieving.
- The school has detailed plans to bring further improvement.
- The governing body provides a good level of support and holds the headteacher and staff to account for the education provided.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Opportunities for pupils to write are not always used effectively to consolidate pupils' writing skills.
- The marking and feedback on pupils' writing is not always rigorous enough to help them improve.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their skills or investigate in mathematics.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to develop as truly independent learners.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, and made short visits to 10 other sessions, some of which were taken by teaching assistants. Four lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- He held discussions with a representative from the local authority, the school improvement partner, the Chair of the Governing Body, five governors, the headteacher, many of the teaching staff and teaching assistants, and groups of pupils.
- He looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, data regarding pupils' progress, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- He scrutinised pupils' written work in a range of subjects and listened to pupils reading.
- He considered the views of 37 parents recorded on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parents' views. He also took into account the views of a number of parents who spoke to him during the inspection and the content of a letter written by a parent.
- He considered the views of four members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Almost all pupils in Years 5 and 6 were absent for a tag rugby competition for most of the first day of the inspection and all pupils in Year 6 attended a diocesan event for school leavers on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Graham Sims, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority or children whose parents are in the armed forces) is well below the national average.
- The school provides a room for a separately registered and privately run nursery, which also shares outdoor facilities with the school's Early Years Foundation Stage. The nursery is inspected separately.
- The number of pupils in Year 6 in 2012 was too small for information on pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 2 to appear on Ofsted's website or for statistical comparisons to be made in relation to the government's current floor standards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in writing and mathematics to match that in reading by ensuring that:
 - opportunities for pupils to write in subjects such as history, geography and religious education are used effectively to consolidate pupils' writing skills
 - the marking and feedback on pupils' written work is rigorous and helps pupils to understand how they might improve their writing
 - pupils have regular and sufficient opportunities to apply their skills in different contexts and to engage in problem-solving and investigative activities in mathematics
 - teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and to become more independent learners.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school at age four with skills, knowledge and abilities that are fairly typical for their age. An increasing proportion, however, enter with lower than expected standards in communication and language. Although they vary from year to year, as is often the case with very small year groups, standards at the end of Year 6 are typically above average in English and just above average in mathematics. Pupils are making good progress in all classes.
- In the Reception Year, children enjoy a stimulating range of well-planned activities, many of which make very good use of the attractive outdoor environment. They make good progress in all areas of learning, and standards are improving. Most children currently in the Reception Year have reached a good level of development and are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- For the last three years, overall standards have been just above the national average at the end of Year 2, indicating good progress from pupils' starting points. Preliminary results for 2013 are similar to those in 2012. Standards have been consistently above average in reading, but have varied in writing and mathematics.
- Results for the very small group of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2012 were below average, but preliminary results for 2013 indicate a return to the pattern of previous years. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made average progress in writing, good progress in mathematics and outstanding progress in reading. Almost every pupil has reached at least the nationally expected Level 4 in writing and mathematics and almost all reached the higher Level 5 in reading.
- Although their standards of attainment vary widely, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their starting points. Teachers hold half-termly meetings to check on the progress of every pupil. Any pupil who is in danger of falling behind is given additional support, either from well-qualified teaching assistants or in small groups taken by the class teacher, to enable them to catch up.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide extra-curricular experiences or additional individual support according to teachers' assessments of what is most appropriate for each individual for whom the school receives the funding. The school's data show that these pupils are making good progress, but there are not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals to comment on their attainment in relation to other pupils without identifying them.
- Throughout the school, pupils make particularly good progress in reading. Although progress is good, it is not as strong in writing and mathematics and not as many pupils exceed the expected level for their age as they do in reading. This is because teachers are not always rigorous enough in their feedback to pupils on how to improve their writing, and not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their skills or investigate in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Although it is not entirely consistent, the quality of teaching in every class is good. The teaching is particularly good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where meticulous planning, excellent use of a wide range of well-prepared resources and good use of teaching assistants ensure that children are fully engaged and have ample opportunity for guided teaching and independent learning. The school feels there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching for the youngest children this year.

- Throughout the school, the excellent relationships between adults and pupils contribute well to an environment which is conducive to good teaching and good learning. Teachers manage their classes well and elicit good response from the pupils. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 stuck with a task they found really difficult because this was their established mode of working. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 shared and listened to their thoughts on prayer with great reverence because the session had been led very sensitively by the class teacher.
- Teachers have a good awareness of the widely differing abilities of the pupils in their classes and plan work at appropriate levels of difficulty for each group. Teaching assistants are used effectively to provide additional support or to teach a small group. In this way, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are helped to make productive use of their time and more-able pupils are given sufficient challenge.
- The teaching of reading has been highly effective. The introduction of sessions to teach phonics (the sounds that letters make) to small groups of pupils, selected according to their level of development, has strengthened pupils' ability to read unfamiliar words. Younger pupils enjoy the weekly session in which they are helped to read by an older pupil and older pupils benefit by learning how to take responsibility. Pupils read regularly outside the classroom.
- Some parents expressed concern at the job-sharing arrangements for teaching their children. While there have been some changes and adjustments during the year, inspectors found no evidence to indicate these arrangements disadvantaged pupils. Staff work well together; time is built into the weekly schedule for teachers to liaise with each other; and pupils' books indicate that there is a consistent level of challenge in the work which pupils undertake.
- Writing skills are taught well, but are not always consolidated effectively. Pupils write extensively for their topic work and in subjects such as science and religious education, but teachers and pupils do not always give enough attention to the quality of writing on these occasions. The quality of marking varies from class to class. In some books, the marking is thorough and regular; in others, work is marked less frequently and comments are not always helpful. Overall, though, the marking is not rigorous enough in pointing out to pupils where and how they might improve their work, and not enough time is given for pupils to respond to teachers' comments.
- Mathematics skills and concepts are taught well and pupils get plenty of practice. However, there are not enough opportunities for them to consolidate their skills by applying them in different contexts through investigative or problem-solving activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. There is a very friendly atmosphere throughout the school, which teachers, parents and pupils liken to being part of a family. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are excellent.
- Pupils feel very safe in school; parents also strongly agree that their children are safe in school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were adamant that bullying is a very rare occurrence and that, even if it does occasionally happen, it never lasts. Pupils show a good ability and strong determination to get on with each other. They also have every confidence that their teachers will deal quickly and fairly with any problems which do occur.
- Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in the attendance level, which has been well above the national average for the last three years and was exceptionally high in 2012.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. They cooperate well with their teachers and respond well to whatever they are asked to do. They show interest in what is being taught and are keen to find out new things. They work happily with a partner or in small groups.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunity to develop as truly independent learners. At times, they provide too much support and do not allow pupils to decide, for example, how they might set about an investigation, what lines of enquiry they should take or how they might present their work or findings. As a result, pupils can become too dependent on an adult when faced with a problem and, at times, they are hesitant to contribute their own thoughts and ideas.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led and managed well. The school has a good understanding of its own performance and of what aspects need improvement. Detailed plans and a regular cycle of activities to check on all aspects of the school's performance indicate the school's drive to improve performance. Since the last inspection, staff have been given greater responsibility for leading and managing different initiatives. Some of these, such as the implementation of the phonics teaching programme, have been managed very effectively.
- Procedures to track pupils' progress, hold teachers to account for the standards achieved by their pupils and to improve the quality of teaching have been strengthened considerably over the last year and are good. Half-termly assessments and meetings to discuss the progress of each pupil ensure that any who might be falling behind are quickly identified. Regular observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work help to ensure the quality of teaching remains good.
- Pupil premium funding and resources for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are managed well. The small size of the school enables all staff to know every pupil well, and there are concerted efforts to make sure staff meet the needs of every pupil. All pupils are integrated well into the life of the school and are given every opportunity to succeed.
- The school provides an interesting and varied curriculum, which provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy, and have a say in developing, the topics through which a number of subjects, such as history, geography, art and design, are taught. Excellent records of children's learning attest to the wide range of stimulating activities for the school's youngest children, and attractive displays throughout the school demonstrate effective teaching and learning through the topics studied. Pupils also have access to a wide range of additional activities, special events and residential visits.
- Around 40% of parents responded to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire, Parent View. While the large majority had positive views of the school, as did the few parents who spoke to the inspector, between a quarter and a third of respondents expressed concerns with some aspects of the school, such as the quality of leadership and management, the way the school responds to concerns, the quality of teaching and the appropriateness of homework. The inspection found no grounds for such concerns, but acknowledges that these could well have reflected past staffing changes and a period when the headteacher was unavoidably absent. Governors and the headteacher acknowledge that they may not always have been proactive enough in communicating with parents.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school. In addition, the school uses the

services of an independent school improvement partner to good effect to moderate the school's own judgements and to help governors and leaders decide on the most important priorities for development.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are highly supportive of the school and contribute a wide range of expertise. They have a good understanding of how well the school is doing in comparison with other schools, and hold the headteacher and staff to account for the standards achieved.
- Through their regular visits and involvement in school life and through the headteacher's reports, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed. They have not yet finalised how they are going to link teachers' pay to performance. They ensure, however, that there are good systems in place to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governors undertake necessary training. Roles and responsibilities are apportioned effectively. They are actively involved in developing plans for the future. They ensure that all statutory duties are met, especially those relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

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	116890
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	412295

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill James
Headteacher	Sarah Walter
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2009
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