

Mepal and Witcham CofE VC Primary School

Brangehill Lane, Mepal, Ely, CB6 2AL

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Achievement is inadequate because, since the last inspection, pupils have not made the progress they should have.
- Teaching is inadequate because poor teaching in the past means that pupils have not attained the levels they are capable of. Standards are lower than they should be and pupils have gaps in their knowledge.
- Work in lessons is not always accurately matched to pupils' abilities or age and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in different subjects.
- Subject leaders have not had the opportunity to develop the skills they need to analyse data and use the information gained to raise standards in their subjects.
- Not all pupils try their hardest in lessons. Some wait until one of the adults in the room reminds them to start their work. Alternatively they sit quietly leaving others to contribute to the lesson.
- The actions taken by the leadership to improve the school's work have only recently made a difference to pupils' learning, although the leadership is very clear as to what needs to be done.
- Senior leaders and managers did not address poor teaching soon enough. Governors have only recently become aware that achievement is not as good as it should be.

The school has the following strengths

- The new leadership team has introduced changes that are driving improvement forwards more rapidly. The headteacher has taken firm action to eliminate inadequate teaching in the school. Teaching is now much stronger and some teaching is good.
- Pupils' progress since September is much better and many are now making good progress in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils behave well around school. They say that the values and rewards systems work well and lessons are rarely disrupted by inappropriate behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons or parts of lessons, seven of which were seen together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, and with a representative of the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with parents and carers.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire Parent View to show results but the inspector took account of the school's own parent questionnaires and 11 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspector observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation including the school's checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- She also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on pupils' attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for certain groups such as pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is also above average.
- The school has been through a turbulent time and suffered a number of staff absences last year.
- The deputy headteacher, who is also the Early Years Foundation Stage and literacy leader, joined the school in September 2013. Another new teacher also started at this time.
- The Chair of the Governing Body took up post in September 2012 and two new governors have joined in the last year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is consistently good by making sure that:
 - work is always accurately matched to pupils' different ages and abilities
 - teachers develop pupils' independent learning skills so that they do not rely too heavily on adults to tell them what to do
 - the pace of lessons maintains the interest of all pupils
 - pupils are given opportunities to develop their literacy skills by writing at length in different subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
 - all leaders are given the opportunity to develop skills to analyse data so that they can drive improvement in their subjects
 - governors are more active in the way they check on the school's performance so that they do not rely too heavily on the headteacher to guide them.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Standards at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 were below average in 2012. While there was a slight improvement in standards in Key Stage 1 in 2013, Key Stage 2 results have declined. Standards in English are particularly low. While progress varied from class to class last year, too many pupils made inadequate progress, especially in reading and writing.
- The results of the national screening check on how well pupils know phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) in Year 1 were above average in 2013. However, progress in reading across Key Stage 1 is not as good as it should be because some pupils do not always understand what they are reading. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were using phonic skills to read unfamiliar words such as 'straight' and 'exclaimed', while one in Year 6 read 'threshold', but not all of them understood the meaning or context of the words.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made similarly varied progress last year, as did pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium. There is no significant difference between their progress and attainment and that of other pupils in school.
- Children start in Reception with different skills from year to year. Assessment of how well they were doing has not always been accurate in the past. However, children's skills when they arrived this year were close to those expected for their age. The current Reception and Year 1 teacher rigorously checks what they are doing and assessment is now accurate, showing children have made good progress since September.
- Since September, all pupils have made good progress in mathematics and many have made good progress in reading. Though a little slower in writing, all year groups have made progress that would be expected by this stage in the term. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are supported by the pupil premium have all made at least expected, and some have made good progress.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunities for physical education both in lessons and clubs. The use of specialist coaches means that their skills are well developed and pupils are enthusiastic about these activities.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching has been inadequate since the last inspection and this has hampered pupils' achievement. Owing to weak teaching and the number of different teachers in some classes last year, pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This makes it difficult to build on previous learning.
- Since September teaching has improved. Occasionally, however, work is too easy or difficult for some pupils in the class. When this happens they lose focus and are not fully involved. In some classes work is not always well matched to the different ages in the class.
- Most lessons start well and pupils are interested and attentive. In some lessons, however, the pace slows as the teacher talks for too long or introduces too many things for pupils to think about. When this happens, again pupils lose focus and sit quietly instead of taking an active part in the lesson.
- Pupils who receive help from the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special

educational needs are now supported well in lessons. Additional adults in the classroom are well briefed and follow the guidance of class teachers. However, when there are a number of adults in the lesson, some pupils rely too much on adult help and do not work well independently.

- Teachers are now identifying where gaps in pupils' knowledge need to be filled. New approaches to the teaching of writing and mathematics focus on these areas. However, teachers do not always develop pupils' literacy skills effectively in topic work and other subjects.
- Reception children who joined the school this year got a good start to their school life. While they work with Year 1 pupils for some parts of the lesson, the teacher makes sure that they are given plenty of opportunities to develop skills through exciting activities both inside and outdoors. For example, while some children enjoyed painting firework pictures with cotton buds, others were engrossed in pretending to put out fires. The class teacher joined in the game to develop children's language and help them explore ideas.
- Since September, pupils have a very clear understanding of how they can improve their work. The high standard of marking in books directs pupils to the next steps in their learning. Pupils understand the system for highlighting their learning objectives and say that this, and the comments that teachers make, are helping them improve. Pupils are also given opportunities to assess how they feel about their progress and teachers use this information in their planning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Occasionally teaching does not enable some pupils to participate as well as they could in lessons. If the pace slows or the level of work is too difficult or easy for them, they lose concentration and sit back while others do the work. On other occasions, some pupils wait for encouragement from adults in the classroom before making an effort to tackle the tasks they have been given.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. Incidents of poor behaviour in the past have been dealt with effectively and there is now little disruption to lessons. When any disruption does occur, it is skilfully managed by staff. Pupils are very understanding of the needs of those who find behaving well difficult.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, including physical bullying and name-calling. They told the inspector that there had been some bullying in the past but it now rarely happens and any incidents are quickly dealt with. They were particularly confident that the headteacher takes pupils' views seriously and diligently follows up any concerns they have.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in different situations. They spoke about visitors who taught them about road, water and internet safety. On the playground, older pupils are aware that they need to look out for the younger ones and so curb any boisterous play. They say that the gates and fencing help them feel safe in school.
- Attendance has improved and is now almost average. For most pupils attendance is high. However, there are a few pupils whose attendance is not as good as it should be and this affects their progress.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher has tackled challenging issues to make sure that teaching and progress improve. There is clear evidence of improvement but pupils' achievement still have some way to

go to make up the ground lost because of the weaker teaching in the past.

- The headteacher tracks and analyses pupils' progress to identify pupils who are not making enough progress, and those that have fallen behind over time. Not all leaders have yet had the opportunity to develop the skills they need to analyse the data the school gathers and use it to drive improvements in their subjects.
- The revised systems to manage teachers' performance, introduced last year, has contributed to improvements in teaching and supported the school in eliminating inadequate teaching. Leaders' judgements about teachers' performance are based directly on how much progress their pupils make and how well they fulfil their different roles in the school. Individual targets are used by senior leaders and the governing body to measure whether promotion up the pay scale is justified by results.
- The new leadership team has already made a difference to the school. Since September, systems have been introduced which have contributed to improvement in pupils' progress, better communications with parents, accurate assessments and improved behaviour. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on how well they are doing to improve attitudes to learning.
- The school rigorously promotes equality of opportunity, tackles discrimination and works hard to make sure that all pupils' achievement improves. No groups of pupils now do any better or worse than others. All pupils are encouraged to participate in activities, regardless of ability or need.
- Physical education is taught well and many additional clubs provide creative and sporting opportunities to help pupils to lead healthy lifestyles. Good use is made of specialist coaches and the school has robust plans to develop this further over the coming year using the primary school sport funding. The school has joined a local sports partnership and coaches will help develop the teaching skills of individual members of staff.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is promoted well. Pupils understand the school values and can talk confidently about them. Close links with the church help to develop spiritual education and there are good opportunities for music and drama in the school. The expectation that all pupils will attend one of the school's clubs helps develop different skills and experiences.
- The local authority has provided support for the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teaching of mathematics, training for governors and has directing the headteacher to local leadership support in the area. This has helped strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and learning.

■ The governance of the school:

- Over the last year, governors have become much more aware of how the school needs to improve. They ask challenging questions of the headteacher when she presents information about how well the school is doing. They visit the school regularly and report their findings to other governors. They know about the quality of teaching. While the Chair of Governors is clear about standards in the school, some governors do not yet have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and are reliant on the headteacher explaining what needs to be done. All governors have attended training and this is helping them develop a more robust approach to checking how well the school is doing. They know about the targets that leaders are setting to improve teaching. They know what the school is doing to reward good teachers and tackle underperformance. They have a good understanding of how the pupil premium is spent, how much difference it has made, and how the primary school sport funding can help develop pupils' physical well-being. Governors have made sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are fully 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	110808
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	425209

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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Stazicker
Headteacher	Nicola Jones
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2012
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