

Earley St Peter's CofE VA Primary School

Church Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 1EY

Inspection dates 17–18 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 over time.
- There is a legacy of underachievement that has not yet been fully overcome. While many pupils make good progress, this is inconsistent, particularly in writing.
- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils. Some tasks planned for pupils are much too easy for them.
- The most able pupils are not always challenged enough, particularly in their writing tasks.
- Pupils do not always write at the highest levels they can outside their English lessons.
- While pupils enjoy their learning, they are not always determined enough to work at a suitable pace without reminders from teachers. Their behaviour requires improvement.
- At times, pupils rely too much on the adults around them to keep focused on their work, or to know how well they have achieved.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving; marking helps reinforce pupils' progress.
- Progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported so they make good progress.
- Pupils feel the school has improved a lot. They feel they are well cared for and they know how to keep themselves safe.
- The new headteacher has quickly established an accurate view of the issues that need to be addressed and is tackling these effectively. Leadership and management are good.
- The headteacher has worked closely with governors and leaders across the school to improve behaviour, establish high expectations of all teachers, and embed systems to gather and evaluate data about pupils' achievement.
- Governors and senior leaders make sure all statutory requirements are met, and that pupils are kept safe.

Information about this inspection

- Three inspectors carried out this inspection over two days. They observed 25 lessons taken by 21 teachers, as well as sessions led by teaching assistants. About a third of these observations were undertaken together with senior leaders from the school.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons and in their books. They spoke to pupils about their work, and their experience of the school, and listened to them reading. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during break and lunch times.
- The inspectors held a range of meetings with teachers who lead aspects of the school, with members of the governing body, and with senior leaders. They reviewed documents showing the developments in the school, plans to bring about further improvements, and teachers' records keeping track of pupils' performance.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority, as well as with a representative from the diocese.
- The inspectors reviewed the 71 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, and spoke to parents informally before and after school. They also considered the responses to a survey for staff.
- During the inspection, the school held its carol service at the local church, as well as a concert for parents and carers of younger pupils.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Vale

Additional Inspector

Keith Homewood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average. There are three classes in each year group from Reception through to Year 2, and two classes in Years 3 to 6. The school also includes a nursery, where children can attend either morning or afternoon sessions.
- The majority of pupils are White British. More pupils than average come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are from Pakistani, Indian, African, and Other Asian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. A few of these pupils join the school at the earliest stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding provided by the government to ensure the achievement of certain groups of pupils, in English and mathematics. These groups include those who are known to have been eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority, and children from families where a parent is serving in the armed forces. The school currently has no pupils in this last category.
- A new executive headteacher was appointed in September 2013. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2012. There have been several other changes in teachers and governors.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, the minimum expectations for attainment and progress of pupils in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching is consistently at least good by:
 - providing greater challenge for the most able pupils
 - using the accurate information teachers have about pupils' standards to match the learning activities more closely to the needs of pupils, throughout each lesson
 - raising teachers' expectations of all pupils so that they work at the highest levels of which they are capable.
- Improve the consistency of progress in writing across the school by giving pupils greater opportunities to develop and apply their writing skills more widely in subjects other than English.
- Build on pupils' improving attitudes towards their learning, by increasing their engagement in learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In recent years, pupils have not made consistently good progress across the school. While pupils made slightly better than the expected progress overall by the end of Year 6 in 2013, because of accelerated progress during Year 6, they had to overcome prior, weaker progress. In particular, girls made good progress, but the progress of boys required improvement.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to make better progress, and the progress of boys and girls is now much closer. However, this also relies on the accelerated progress they make in Year 5 and 6 to overcome some slow progress earlier in their time at the school, particularly in writing. Pupils do not always apply the writing skills they are developing when they write in lessons other than English.
- Children join the school in the nursery with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age, although higher proportions than usual speak English as an additional language. The excellent resources and teaching mean they make a rapid start to their learning in the nursery. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is usually good, although the progress of less able pupils is not always as well supported.
- In lessons across the school, pupils now make good progress more often, although some variation remains. Progress in mathematics has improved considerably, and is now more consistently good, particularly for the most able pupils. However, these able pupils do not always make as much progress as they could in their writing. Work in their books shows that these inconsistencies are evident over time.
- At times, the activities teachers plan for pupils are not challenging enough and do not stretch the most able pupils, or they have to answer lots of simpler questions before they are allowed to get on with the more interesting work.
- A well-established approach to teaching phonics (the linking of letters and the sounds they make) means that pupils become confident readers and enjoy using the library and reading areas. More pupils than average reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1.
- In the past the progress of pupils who were eligible for support through the pupil premium funding required improvement. More recently these pupils are making better progress. They are on track to reach standards which are about six months behind other pupils in the school, a considerable narrowing of the previous gap.
- Previously the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs was variable. Those supported at school action, in particular, did not make good progress. The strategies used to support them are now more effective and their progress has improved considerably.
- Pupils from different backgrounds make similar progress to others. Those who speak English as an additional language are very well supported and rapidly develop their confidence in communicating and understanding English. They often make rapid progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved and an increasing proportion of teaching is good, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Teaching in the nursery is outstanding. However, there is not yet enough teaching of the highest quality across the school, and too much remains which is not fully effective.
- Where lessons are less successful, the most able pupils, in particular, are too often expected to sit through explanations they do not need, and this limits the amount of time they have to do challenging work.
- In the best lessons, work is well matched to pupils' needs. For example, the most able pupils in mathematics in Year 6 work at levels which are well above those expected. However, there remain some occasions when teachers across the school give pupils work that is not hard

enough, particularly in writing.

- At times, pupils work lack a sense of urgency about how much work they should be able to complete in the time available. This particularly happens when pupils are expected to work on their own, whilst adults are supporting other groups of pupils.
- Teachers increasingly use good questioning to check how well pupils have grasped the concepts covered. These strategies are well understood by teachers and are now being used more consistently.
- Marking of pupils' work has also been a focus for improvement, and is now a successful part of helping to raise standards. Pupils frequently read the comments and are expected to do something about them. For example, pupils in a Year 3 class were well focused on finding things to improve in their books during their 'Fix-It' time. This means pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning from their mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- While pupils' behaviour has improved considerably, particularly this term, there is a legacy of pupils depending on adults for reminders about what is expected of them. This means that pupils sometimes work passively on the tasks teachers have given them, waiting for an adult to suggest what they should do next, rather than deciding this for themselves.
- Outside lessons, pupils say that behaviour has improved a great deal and that they now get along much better. They are increasingly able to resolve differences when they fall out. Teachers and other adults are helping pupils to develop more effective strategies for thinking about their actions and choices so that they play a more positive role within the school.
- The strategies for recognising good and poor behaviour are well understood and used consistently across the school by all adults. Pupils say that the new headteacher has made sure that behaviour improves, because she spends lots of time in lessons and around the school, reminding them about what she expects. They say that lessons are now seldom disrupted because of poor behaviour.
- Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties are particularly well supported by very well informed adults. They are helped to develop strategies to stay calm and to deal with the issues they may be facing.
- The school makes sure pupils have a good understanding of what might constitute bullying. Pupils say that this used to happen, but that it does not happen now. Pupils themselves have made sure that the school's zero tolerance towards bullying is clearly displayed around the school.
- Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get along very well, and enjoy celebrating each other's traditions and beliefs. The school's excellent links with the local church mean that there is a strong emphasis on the core values and ethos as a church aided school.
- Pupils feel safe in school because of the good security and the steps the school takes to make sure pupils are well informed about their own safety. For example, pupils understand what they can do to stay safe around water, on the roads and when using the internet. They also feel that any concerns they raise will be dealt with quickly.
- Pupils say that lessons have become much more interesting because teachers are making their learning more practical and fun. However, they do feel that work could sometimes be even harder. The development of 'lead learners' gives more able pupils the opportunity to reinforce what they know, while helping other pupils.
- Their enjoyment of school and the opportunities they have, together with the strong emphasis the school has put on being at school, mean that pupils' attendance has improved rapidly and is now above average.

The leadership and management

are good

- The new headteacher and senior leaders have quickly brought about very significant

improvements, well focused on the most important issues. The headteacher has set high expectations of all staff and she makes sure these are clearly understood by all. The school now has the capacity to continue the rapid improvements begun last year. There is considerable determination to bring about the ambitious vision for high quality education that the headteacher and governors have established.

- Pupils and parents speak very highly of the changes the headteacher has implemented. Pupils said that she has had 'a huge impact on the school' because she regularly looks at what they are learning in lessons.
- Good opportunities for training and support have been targeted on the most important issues. Teachers who lead aspects of the school have developed their leadership and are improving the areas they are responsible for by closely checking that strategies they implement make a difference quickly. For example, marking has been closely monitored.
- Every teacher is expected to evaluate the progress of every pupil in their class, and is held to account so that any pupil falling behind is supported quickly and effectively. The monitoring, tracking and assessment of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are now a strength of the school, and ensure that the support these pupils receive is highly effective and that their progress accelerates.
- The headteacher and governors make sure that any pay awards take into account the quality and consistency of the teaching and leadership of teachers, so that the finances of the school provide good value for money, and the performance of the school improves.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of experiences to develop their skills. Pupils feel that the topics they study are interesting and engaging, for boys and girls. The curriculum also makes good use of the diversity of backgrounds of the pupils and families within the school. There is excellent focus on equality of opportunity, and discrimination of any kind would not be tolerated.
- The curriculum also gives pupils particularly good opportunities to think deeply about spiritual, moral and cultural ideas. Assemblies contribute very positively towards pupils' reflection about the world around them, and about those whose experience of life may be very different from their own. Pupils like the 'take-away thought' that they can reflect on for the rest of the day.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities to participate in musical, cultural and social activities, such as singing in a massed choir and the clubs and activities available after school.
- Senior leaders have made sure that the funding to improve teachers' skills in providing physical education is used well, including for sports coaching. A recent appointment is set to develop this further.
- The local authority has provided the school with a high level of support over the past few years. However, as the governors and senior leaders have tackled the key issues convincingly, this support has been reduced greatly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been considerable changes in the membership of the governing body. Governors are well aware of their responsibilities, and have sought out appropriate training to make sure they are very well informed about the performance of the school, in relation to other schools. Members of the governing body have been instrumental in driving many of the important improvements in the school, and they support the headteacher very well in bringing about the changes that are necessary. Together with senior leaders, governors make sure that all statutory requirements are met, particularly those for keeping pupils safe. They challenge the school well, checking the information they are given by establishing their own views, visiting the school and talking to parents and pupils. They have a robust process for managing the performance of the headteacher, and check that this is similarly robust for other staff.
 - Members of the governing body make sure that the financial resources of the school increasingly provide the best possible opportunities for pupils' education.

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	110009
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	426424

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	518
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Peters
Headteacher	Hester Wooller
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2011
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