

The Rackham Church of England Primary School

Main Street, Witchford, Ely, CB6 2HQ

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

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.

- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. All staff share a clear commitment to raising standards and improving teaching and learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and enjoy learning and coming to school. They behave well, and often in an exemplary manner.
- The headteacher and the other leaders are taking effective action to further raise the quality of teaching and consequently the rate at which pupils progress.
- The governors know the school and its work well. They are supportive and are working to raise the standards of governance even higher.
- Parents consistently report that this is a 'happy school' where pupils feel safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most able pupils are not always challenged to do as well as they could.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills by writing at length.
- Very occasionally, pupils' attitudes to learning fall below the usual high level.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by 12 teachers, together with a number of short parts of lessons and other activities, as well as groups led by teaching assistants. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors also watched an assembly, lunchtime and playtimes, as well as watching how pupils arrived at and left school.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, teaching and other staff, school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of the 63 responses to the online survey Parent View and the 34 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also obtained the views of more than 30 parents bringing their children into different classes in the school.
- The inspectors observed the school at work and considered a range of documentation. This included data on pupils' progress and attainment and future projections based on the school's analysis of pupils' progress, school improvement planning and the school's procedures to enable it to gain an accurate view of its performance. In addition, the inspectors looked at minutes of governing body meetings and documentation relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

St.John Burkett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Nichola Perry	Additional Inspector
Maxine Clewlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above-average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is very low.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is very low. This is additional funding, which in this school supports pupils who are in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- A pre-school and a breakfast club are situated within the main school buildings. They are managed by organisations other than the school, and inspected separately.
- 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 and achievement by ensuring that teachers:
 - give pupils more opportunities to write longer pieces of work
 - insist that pupils consistently take pride in the presentation of their work through high standards of handwriting and carefully setting out tasks in their books
 - adjust work to make it challenging when pupils have successfully mastered a skill
 - give more-able pupils harder work to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- No matter what their individual starting points, the school's data shows that all groups of pupils make good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The work in pupils' books supports this view.
- The levels of children's knowledge when they start in the Reception class are typically in line with the expectations for their age. Most children progress well to reach the goals they are expected to by the end of the Reception Year.
- Standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2013 were in line with the national average, although were below average at the end of Key Stage 1. Due to improvements in the quality of teaching, which is good and improving, the school's data show that pupils are on track to make good progress this year by the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The work seen in pupils' books shows that some, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6, are making exceptional progress and a rising number are working at the higher levels.
- Results from the national phonics checks in the last two years show that the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard was below average. The school has improved the way it teaches the sounds that letters make so that the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard has risen and is expected to be above average at the next check. Standards seen by inspectors in books and when children read were high.
- Pupils of all ages are competent readers and enjoy reading a wide range of books. They are strongly supported by their teachers in developing strong reading habits, and the school maintains an excellent stock of good quality books which pupils find interesting.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress because of well-chosen personalised support, and because teachers adjust their lesson plans to ensure they are able to work successfully alongside their classmates.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support eligible pupils. The very small number of eligible pupils in Year 6 last year means that it is not appropriate to judge their attainment without risk of identifying individuals, but attainment gaps are closing this year due to carefully planned teaching which ensures their progress is as good as that of their classmates.
- Although the more-able pupils make good progress overall, teachers do not always check their understanding and challenge them to work at the higher standards of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers make learning interesting by planning work which engages pupils' interest and develops their knowledge and skills in a range of subjects. Pupils' strong attitudes to learning are reflected in the outstanding relationships between pupils and staff and the purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers show high expectations of what the pupils can do, and they readily respond to the challenge. In one lesson, pupils were asked to think of similes about rocks and cats, and made suggestions beyond what might be expected for their age, such

as 'an athlete as fast as a leopard'.

- Sometimes, teachers do not check pupils' learning closely enough when they are asked to do tasks which are repetitive, such as completing a list of sums, so they do not amend the work to make it more challenging for pupils who have mastered the skill.
- Pupils understand clearly what they are learning because teachers explain it well, and they are starting to gauge the quality of their own work.
- Teachers work effectively to develop pupils' basic literacy skills, which they are increasingly applying in their writing. This is leading to more pupils making better than expected progress and reaching the higher levels. However, pupils are not given enough opportunity to extend their writing skills by writing longer pieces of work across a range of subject areas.
- Teachers plan well to cover basic skills in mathematics, giving attention to developing problem-solving skills. The recent emphasis on developing teaching skills in mathematics is beginning to lead to higher rates of progress across the school.
- Teaching assistants work well with pupils of all ages. They are particularly effective in helping those who find learning more difficult, supporting the teaching of reading and using practical resources to aid less confident learners in mathematics and other subjects.
- Some very effective learning was seen when pupils supported each other in successfully completing tasks and helping each other to develop their thinking through discussing their work. In mathematics, for example, two pupils discussed in detail the best way to multiply 1.5×8 .
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Some examples are very effective in helping pupils understand how they can improve their work. Teachers point out what pupils have done well and identify key points for improvement.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are well catered for through a good range of purposeful activities with a wide variety of resources for both indoor and outdoor learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well and in an often exemplary manner in lessons and around the school, for example when going into assembly or leaving a classroom. Just occasionally, where lesson activities are less interesting, some pupils become restless and lose concentration. They like and trust their teachers and feel listened to, and consequently are polite and respectful to adults and to each other. Pupils are confident speakers and express their views clearly.
- Pupils work well in lessons, respond quickly to teachers' instructions, cooperate well with each other on tasks and are friendly and helpful. They are enthusiastic to learn, and teachers are becoming increasingly skilful at talking to pupils about how to improve their work. In one class a child enthusiastically said after speaking to the teacher, 'I've got a new target!'
- Pupils take care over the content of their work, and are proud of what they achieve. However, standards of presentation across the school are inconsistent, and handwriting is often untidy.
- Pupils speak well about behaviour and say that they get on well together. They say lessons are rarely interrupted by poor behaviour, and that behaviour at breaktimes is good. They have very

good access to play equipment at playtimes and lunchtimes, and the system of play leaders and buddies contributes well to happy playtimes. Adults spoken to said the good behaviour seen by the inspectors is typical.

- Pupils, parents and governors all remarked that the school is a 'happy place' for pupils to be.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Bullying is rare because teachers deal effectively with it. Children say that they are readily able to report incidents to adults and that any poor behaviour soon stops. The use of circle time and other effective teaching helps to ensure children understand the various strategies to keep themselves safe, and that they are aware of different forms of bullying such as cyberbullying. Parents and carers responding to the online survey Parent View agree that pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school because they say lessons are interesting and because they like working and playing with their friends. Consequently attendance is high, and the school works closely with families to ensure all pupils attend regularly.
- School councillors enjoy their responsibilities and are pleased that they help to support both the school and the wider community through, for example, their work in raising funds for and developing the sensory garden. Other groups also support the school, for example some parents and governors are actively raising funds through the 'Three Peaks Challenge'.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke to more than 30 parents, all of whom were very supportive of the school. They consider that their children are happy and safe and making good progress. A few parents expressed concern about the high mobility of teachers and the effect this may have had on their children's learning and progress. Whilst a number of teachers have changed during the last year, inspection evidence shows that this has not disrupted pupils' good progress.

The leadership and management are good

- Effective leadership by the headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, has ensured that the school has continued to give pupils a good education since the previous inspection. Their progress across the school has usually been good and teaching is effective.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a strong team who are moving the school forward. Subject and other leaders are keen to promote continuing improvement, and have played their part in ensuring that a rising proportion of pupils are exceeding nationally expected progress.
- The headteacher has a clear and accurate view of the school and the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the plans for further improvement focus on the correct priorities. Governors and staff are regularly involved in checking progress towards the identified goals.
- All leaders undertake checks on the quality of teaching and learning. Detailed lesson observations, informal visits and checks on work in books ensure the headteacher has a clear view of the effectiveness of teaching and what needs to be done to improve it further. Consequently, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils are making improving progress.
- The school's own assessment information and checks on test results provide accurate information about how well pupils are doing from when they join the school to when they leave. As a result, leaders are able to give immediate support to those falling behind, but also set

challenging targets to help increase the numbers of pupils exceeding nationally expected progress and reaching the higher levels of attainment. Regular reviews indicate that pupils' progress is accelerating across the school.

- Leaders' systems to check on staff performance are effective, and staff value highly the support and training provided to improve the quality of their teaching.
- The quality of teaching has been strengthened through a number of new appointments made to the school within the last year.
- The school has carefully considered how it will use the extra primary school sports funding so that its impact can be sustained. It has provided wide-ranging training for staff to develop their expertise, and activities such as the 'Change for Life' schemes have developed an enthusiasm for outdoor activities and a sense of teamwork.
- The headteacher uses strong partnerships with other schools in the local area to check the work of the school and to offer training and development opportunities for staff.
- The local authority has provided a good level of support which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching. At the request of the school, it is currently supporting the development of the teaching of mathematics.
- Parents are strongly supportive. A small number have indicated through the online survey Parent View that they believe the school is not led and managed well. However, inspectors found that the leadership and management of the school are good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and provide good support and challenge to the school. They know how effective teaching and learning are because the headteacher keeps them very well informed, the standards committee reviews the school's data in detail and governors are now making a growing number of visits to the school to see first-hand how well it is performing.
 - Governors make sure that all safeguarding policies and procedures meet national requirements so that pupils and staff are kept safe.
 - The business manager keeps them well informed of the state of the school finances which they carefully check, including the pupil premium and sports funding, and how well this is used to provide additional teaching and resources for pupils. They are involved in the process of managing staff performance, making sure that increases in pay are linked to performance.
 - Governors acknowledge that the current membership of the governing body does not fully reflect the make-up of the school community, and are seeking to redress the balance in future appointments.

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	110807
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	431242

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	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Craig D’Cunha
Headteacher	Suzanne Carter
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2009
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