

Peak Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Peak Forest, Buxton, SK17 8EG

Inspection dates 2–3 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The acting headteacher provides good leadership. She has built upon the solid foundations laid by the substantive headteacher and, as a result, the school has improved since its last inspection.
- Governors take an active part in improving the school. They know the school well because they visit regularly and hold the acting headteacher to account for the school's performance.
- Pupils benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum. The school uses its locality to good effect in developing pupils' academic achievement and their social and emotional development.
- Pupils behave well. They are caring and considerate to each other. Parents and carers see this as a strength of the school.
- Pupils' learning benefits from opportunities to apply their knowledge to real-life situations. This helps to improve their understanding of basic skills.
- All pupils, regardless of their ability, achieve well. This is particularly true in reading and mathematics.
- The school promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for its pupils. Staff provide good opportunities for children to prepare for life in their community and further afield.
- Children make a good start to their education in the Reception year. They progress quickly in this safe and secure environment as a result of good teaching and positive relationships with the older children of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The headteacher and governors do not use data as well as they might do to monitor the effectiveness of their actions to improve the school.
- The headteacher has taken on too many responsibilities and the leadership skills of other staff are not being developed effectively.
- Pupils' progress in writing is not as fast as it is in reading and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in five lessons, including four observations carried out jointly with the acting headteacher. He observed the teaching of early reading skills and listened to pupils reading. He also talked to pupils about their school and looked at examples of pupils' work in all year groups to gain a view of how effective teaching has been over time.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, members the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to parents informally at the start of the school day. He took account of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and took note of the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents including: the school's own self-evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning; the school's most recent data on the attainment and progress of pupils; information provided to families; information relating to the safeguarding of pupils; and the school's most recent data relating to the attendance and punctuality of pupils.
- The inspector considered the range and quality of information provided on the school's website.

Inspection team

Stephen McMullan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Peak Forest Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils attend from the local village and the surrounding area.
- Children in the early years are taught in the same class as older children in Years 1 and 2. Children in the Reception year attend full time.
- Until very recently, all pupils were of white British heritage; this has now altered with a very small number from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below the national average. This funding provides extra support for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special education needs is currently above the national average.
- The small size of particular year groups means that data for pupils' performance does not appear in published form. This is because it may be possible to identify individual pupils from this information.
- An acting headteacher is in place because of the long-term ill health of the substantive headteacher.
- There has been considerable teacher turnover in the last three years, with one teacher in post since January 2015 and a new teacher recruited for September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - enabling pupils to extend their vocabulary and rehearse what they plan to write
 - increasing pupils' ability to write independently for sustained periods.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that the long-term plans for the school are clear about who is responsible for the actions that should be taken, the date by which they should be completed and the impact of those actions
 - developing the skills of the headteacher and the governing body in analysing, interpreting and presenting data
 - involving more staff in the leadership and management of different aspects of school life.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher is a very effective leader and is carrying on the good work and example of the absent headteacher. Their shared vision of the school is warmly embraced by staff, parents and pupils and this has resulted in a school that meets the needs of this predominantly rural community.
- The school has coped well with recent staff changes. Leaders have been very well supported by advisers from the local authority who have worked with them to maintain much needed stability. The effect of this has been that pupils' achievement has improved during a very challenging period. As a result, the school is no longer reliant on external support and has the capacity to improve further under the current leadership.
- Staff are unanimous in their support for school leaders. They feel highly appreciated for the work they do and buy in to the ethos of caring and valuing each individual at the school. Staff believe that, like the children, they come to school to learn and this makes them good role models for the pupils. They ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils and contribute well to the school's refusal to tolerate any form of discrimination.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the broad education the school's curriculum provides for their children. In particular, they value the balance between high academic expectations and links to local traditions such as the annual Wakes Weeks, when pupils are involved in decorating water wells. They appreciate the close family feel of the school and the good levels of communication with staff.
- The acting headteacher has had a significant impact on school improvement. She has updated and improved the curriculum, introducing opportunities for children to develop further their spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning while also equipping them for life in modern Britain. Examples include: the use of a mobile display on multiculturalism, to which parents were invited; a whole-school visit to the local polling station to watch how people cast their vote during the general election; and the development of woodland learning which takes place in an adjacent ancient wood. A number of parents commented positively on the school's 'commitment to the living world' and 'the use of the natural environment to develop their children's learning'. Pupils have a well-developed understanding of their local heritage and their role as citizens of the wider world.
- The acting headteacher has a very accurate picture of how well the school is doing and what needs to happen to improve it further. The school has tackled the issues raised during its previous inspection and this has resulted in improvements in pupils' achievement. An action plan for improving the school further correctly identifies the school's next steps, but it is not precise enough. The same is true about the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress. As a result, the school is not getting the best use out of this important information in order to guide decision making and to hold staff fully to account.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding for disadvantaged children very well, providing targeted extra support to raise their attainment and improve their social and emotional well-being. The school is also making good use of the primary physical education and sport premium funding to widen the range of competitive and non-competitive activities available to pupils. This has resulted in an increase in participation rates for pupils.
- The acting headteacher takes responsibility for all aspects of leadership and management in the school. This has been necessary because of the absence of the headteacher and instability in staffing. She checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' work regularly and accurately. She has made sure that policies and practices for keeping children safe have been updated and meet current requirements. In her role as special educational needs coordinator, she has ensured that links with external agencies are strong and meet the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special education needs. While there are benefits to her taking on so many roles, this places an over-reliance on one person and the leadership skills of other staff are not being developed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have worked closely with the acting headteacher and local authority to maintain stability at

the school during the absence of the headteacher. They have overseen improvements in pupils' achievement, balancing the need to challenge the school to improve while still being sensitive to the social and emotional needs of staff and pupils.

- The governing body recognises the importance of its role in bringing about improvements in the school. Governors understand their responsibilities and their role in holding the acting headteacher and the school to account. They are aware of nationally produced data on the school's performance and how this drives the school's improvement priorities. They also use these data to set performance targets for staff. This process has been improved since the last inspection and is now much more effective in ensuring that improving pupils' achievement is a priority, for example in awarding pay increases.
- Not all positions on the governing body are filled and it has been difficult to find suitable candidates in the past. The Chair of the Governing Body has sought to increase the range of backgrounds from which governors are drawn and to match their skills to the responsibilities that need to be taken up. He is very aware of the need to make sure that the governing body remains dynamic over time and to undertake regular reviews of the roles and responsibilities of governors.
- The governing body meets its statutory duties including those for the safeguarding of pupils. Governors are alert to the possible impact of wider safeguarding issues such as extremism and the need to prepare pupils for life beyond the school gates.
- Governors know the school and its pupils well. They take an active role in the life of the school and are increasingly involved in monitoring activities. For example, one governor attended the school during the national testing for pupils in Year 6 to develop his understanding of what this entailed. This regular involvement means that governors have a very clear and accurate picture of the quality of teaching. They value the opinions and input of staff and parents and act quickly to improve the school for everyone, as in the case of planned improvements to create additional teaching space.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, courteous, respectful and considerate to others, including those classmates who may find it harder to adapt to school life. The size of the school means that children of different ages learn and play together well, with older children supporting and befriending younger children. Older pupils plan games and activities for younger ones in the playground, either joining in or keeping a watchful eye to make sure that participants are safe and fully involved.
- In discussions, parents, carers and pupils refer to the 'extended family feeling' in the school. They see this as a significant strength of the school, reporting that behaviour is good and there is no bullying or name calling. Pupils speak fondly of the school, valuing the adults and the help they provide. They enjoy the variety of learning opportunities on offer, both indoors and outdoors and highlight their woodland learning as it 'brings learning to life' and 'teaches them to care'.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Occasionally, pupils can drift away from their task but this is rare and short-lived because teaching is matched closely to their needs.
- Attendance is good and is slightly above the national average. There is no persistent absenteeism and the school has good systems in place to make sure that any absence is followed up within minutes of the start of each school day.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. In this small school, all adults place a high priority on keeping children safe and the school's systems for keeping records of child protection matters are good. The acting headteacher ensures that staff are made fully aware of updates in safeguarding practice and that policies and procedures are followed.
- Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and how this can affect other children. They are confident that by telling an adult they will have any problems solved. They report no instances of unsuitable language or name calling. Pupils are very clear about the methods by which the school keeps them safe, such as e-safety, and they feel safe around the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers' expectations are high. They set work with levels of challenge that take account of the learning needs of each child in the two mixed-age classes. This is a view shared by pupils and parents. As a result, children are usually absorbed in their work.
- There are common themes to lessons but the work is matched to individual pupil's abilities and their next steps in learning. Teachers focus on pupils applying their skills and knowledge and this helps them to deepen their understanding of subjects. For example, pupils in Class 1 used shopping catalogues to apply their knowledge of money to spend an imaginary amount raised from a school disco; in Class 2, pupils used calculations of volume to estimate the number of matchboxes fitted into a shoebox or the number of hay bales stored in a barn. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics is particularly good.
- Teachers are flexible in their approaches to learning. They adapt lessons quickly and effectively to meet the developing needs and interests of the pupils. The outdoors is used as an extension of the classroom and lessons often move from one to the other to capture the imagination and learning styles of different pupils. As a result, children can talk in depth about their learning, for example in Class 2 where pupils could recount a recent science investigation on plants, their findings and the relevance of this to their everyday lives.
- Pupils' work is marked in great depth and this helps to identify improvements needed. 'Fix-it' time is built-in to lessons to make sure that pupils understand the marking and what they need to do to improve their work. They take great pride in their work and the presentation in their books is of a high standard throughout the school. Homework is set regularly and pupils are clear about its purpose and the positive effect it has on their learning.
- Additional adults are used effectively to enhance pupils' learning. Teaching assistants understand their role and contribute effectively to the learning of children of all abilities. Volunteers hear children read and this adds both to the community feel of the school and to pupils' achievement in reading. Reading books are matched closely to pupils' abilities and younger pupils who are emerging as readers use their phonic skills successfully. Pupils with additional needs are well catered for and teachers make sure that they make time to support directly every child in their class during every lesson.
- Teachers and teaching assistants develop pupils' understanding by the use of skilful questioning. They make sure that all pupils have opportunities to contribute to lessons and challenge them to think about what they are learning. However, adults often accept one-word or short answers to their questions and do not encourage pupils to practise longer, more complex sentences enough. This limits the range of words spoken and seen in writing books and, as a consequence, pupils make less progress in writing than in other subjects.
- Pupils undertake extended pieces of work in writing but a few find it difficult to work without direct adult supervision at these times and lose concentration. This means that they make less progress in this subject than they could do.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' good achievement is the result of consistently good teaching which is seen in lessons, the work pupils have in their books and the data on their attainment and progress provided by the school. Achievement is strongest in reading and mathematics.
- Children enter the school with levels of development below those typical for their age in communication and language. By the end of Year 2, the majority of children have made good progress and in 2014 reached standards that broadly matched the national averages in reading and mathematics, with slightly lower standards in writing. During Key Stage 2, they make progress at a faster rate in reading and mathematics and this meant that in 2014, all pupils in Year 6 left the school having achieved expected attainment levels or above. The school's most recent assessment of pupils' progress and the work in their books suggest that pupils across the school make at least expected progress and often more than this in reading and mathematics.

- Progress is less strong in writing. While the majority of pupils make the expected progress, fewer make more than the expected progress compared with reading and mathematics. Their work is well presented and they undertake extended pieces of writing regularly. However, in some instances, pupils have an over-reliance on the input of their teacher and find it hard to complete writing tasks on their own. They do not have sufficient opportunities to rehearse their writing in speech before they put pen to paper and this limits their vocabulary choices.
- The achievement of disabled pupils, those who have special education needs and pupils supported through the pupil premium is good. Good teaching and well-directed support results in these groups making progress that is often faster than the progress made by other children nationally. Consequently, the gaps between their achievement and that of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics have narrowed over time.
- The most-able pupils are well challenged in their lessons. They make good progress as a result of work which is accurately matched to their learning needs.
- The school's assessment processes are accurate. They are used effectively to guide the next steps in learning for pupils. Data are used very effectively to monitor the progress of every pupil and to make sure that no pupil is left behind. However, not enough detail is included within the data to explore fully the achievement of different groups of pupils against similar groups nationally. The school is adapting its assessment procedures to meet the needs of the new National Curriculum

The early years provision is good

- The early years is led successfully by both the acting headteacher and the class teacher. They have received excellent support from the local authority and this has resulted in the limited teaching space being organised and used effectively. Learning intentions are clear at each of the activities on offer and there are extra challenges for the children to undertake to extend their learning.
- The behaviour of the children is exemplary. They quickly adapt to the good behaviour modelled by their older classmates, learning to take turns and join in appropriately in class activities and discussions. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for through direct teaching opportunities and more informal work with adults. Children enjoy playing with older children in the playground, who also make sure that they are safe and well cared for. The early years setting is safe and secure with clear procedures for ensuring that children are not put at risk of harm.
- The quality of teaching is good. Tasks are matched closely to the abilities of the children and it is the quality of this matching that enables them to make good progress from their starting points. In communication, language, literacy and mathematics, the children's learning is linked to that of the older children in the class but delivered in an age-appropriate manner. The teacher and teaching assistant make sure that the children are well supported but also challenged in their learning. The children work well together and clearly enjoy their time at school. During one lesson, they particularly enjoyed acting out the story of 'The Highway Rat' and sharing this with their older classmates who had been writing about the story.
- When children enter the early years, their physical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world are typical for their age, but their language and communication skills are less well developed. By the time they leave the early years, they have made good and sometimes outstanding progress in all areas of their development. This means that they achieve or are close to achieving good levels of development by the time they enter Year 1. Children are particularly well prepared for this transition as they have already spent the year alongside the older pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Each child's achievements and development are recorded in detailed 'Learning Journey' documents. These are used to support teachers' assessments and guide next steps in learning. Parents are invited to share events and stories from home to help build a fuller picture of each child's progress.

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	112848
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	462030

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	37
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Fox
Acting Headteacher	Ros Carter
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2013
Telephone number	01298 22074
Email address	info@peakforest.derbyshire.sch.uk

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