

St Mary and St John CofE VA Primary School

Church Street, North Luffenham, Oakham, LE15 8JR

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and, as a result, pupils' progress is uneven in Years 1 to 6.
- Attainment in writing is not as high as it should be.
- Teachers' expectations are at times too low. This results in too few pupils making really good progress.
- In some lessons, all pupils sit and listen to the same explanations when higher-ability pupils could be getting on with more challenging work.
- The marking of pupils' work does not always provide clear guidance on their next steps in learning.
- Some senior and middle leaders do not have the skills needed to drive improvement in their areas of work.
- Procedures used by leaders for checking the impact of teaching on pupils' progress are not robust enough.
- The school does not have a strategy for the use of the additional funding received to tackle disadvantage, or for checking its impact on pupils' progress and well-being.

The school has the following strengths

- The strong governing body is providing stability and a clear sense of direction in a period of considerable change.
- Outstanding leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures children make good progress in stimulating indoor and outdoor areas.
- The school has a calm atmosphere and pupils behave well in corridors and the playground.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and parents report that their children are kept safe in school.
- The school is good at helping pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons, three of which were joint observations, two with the headteacher and one with the literacy coordinator.
- They also observed the breakfast club and the after-school sandwich club, a school assembly and made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other staff and pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and its vice-chair, and some parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors heard groups of pupils of different ages reading.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the teachers' questionnaire and 38 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- They looked at the school's policies, teachers' plans, school improvement planning and records on behaviour and safety, together with samples of pupils' work. They also looked at tracking documentation on individual pupils' progress, pupils' statements of special educational need, information on how the performance of staff is managed and documentation and minutes from meetings of the governing body

Inspection team

Kenneth Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Tabberer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary and St John is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for particular pupils who need it) is below average.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds; none speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average. The proportions supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school sandwich club which are managed by the governing body.
- The acting headteacher took up his post in September 2012. At the same time, four new teachers joined the staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by providing pupils with:
 - more opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences in all subjects
 - more examples of the quality of work they should aspire to achieve.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the progress pupils can make in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to engage in more challenging independent work
 - when marking pupils' work, giving clear guidance on the standard of the work and what they have to do to improve it, and giving them time to respond to the comments in their books.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that checks on the quality of teaching lead to sharply focused action that helps pupils make faster progress
 - providing all staff in leadership roles with the training needed to be able to identify and tackle weaknesses in their areas of responsibility
 - implementing a robust system for holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their classes
 - developing a strategy, involving the governing body, for the use of pupil premium funding and for measuring its impact on the progress and well-being of the pupils for whom it is intended.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the Reception class with a range of skills and abilities that are generally typical for children of their age. Teaching is consistently of high quality and they make rapid progress in all areas of learning. As a result, pupils' personal, social and emotional development, and the communication and calculation skills of most, are well above the national average when they enter Year 1.
- Inconsistencies in teaching and learning mean the excellent progress made in Reception is not built upon in Years 1 to 6. Pupils make good progress in some lessons but slower progress in others. Consequently, although attainment at the end of Year 6 is generally above the national average, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable, particularly higher-ability pupils.
- Attainment in reading and mathematics is higher than in writing because pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to write at length, either in literacy lessons or in other subjects. Also, pupils are not provided with enough examples of the quality of writing they should aspire to reach, for example, through classroom displays of the best writing.
- In the Reception class, children are particularly successful in learning letters and sounds (phonics). This underpins the above-average level of attainment reached at the end of Year 2. By Year 6, the vast majority of pupils enjoy reading books that interest and entertain them and can also use their reading skills to gather information.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and of those for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium, is similar to that of their peers. They make good progress in some lessons but slower progress in others. Specialist support means pupils who have a statement of educational needs achieve successfully.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is wide variability in the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6. Teachers do not all have high enough expectations of how much progress pupils can make in lessons.
- Where teaching requires improvement, the same work is given to all pupils without taking account of their different ability levels. This is because teachers do not make enough use of their knowledge of pupils' attainment levels when they plan lessons. Too often, pupils of all abilities sit and listen to the same long explanations of learning when they, and higher-ability pupils in particular, are capable of moving on more quickly.
- The marking of pupils' work varies too much in its quality and effectiveness. This contributes to the inconsistencies in pupils' progress. Where pupils are given guidance on what to do to improve their work, they are not always given enough time to follow it through and so do not learn from correcting their own mistakes.
- Where the learning of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those entitled to the pupil premium is most successful, teachers use teaching assistants well to support individuals and small groups. In less effective situations, teaching assistants are passive because teachers talk for too long and this limits the time pupils have for independent work.

- There are a number of strengths in teaching. Teachers generally make good use of new technology and other resources to help learning, especially in the teaching seen in the Reception class. Here, adults make good use of the well-planned indoor and outdoor areas to develop children's language, numeracy skills and social skills, and to promote their physical development.
- Where teachers set work that actively involves the pupils and makes clear exactly what they are expected to learn, pupils make good progress. For example, in an English lesson, pupils in Year 2 made good progress in extending sentences using connectives because the work was well planned to match pupils' differing needs. Pupils made good gains in learning because they were actively engaged in work that interested them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' good behaviour and friendly attitudes help to promote a positive atmosphere for learning. The overwhelming majority of pupils are attentive, follow the school rules and comply with the requests of adults.
- Pupils are polite and helpful to adults and visitors to the school. They are keen to take on responsibility and play a constructive role in the life of the school through the school council or as assembly monitors, for example.
- Pupils report that they feel safe, secure and happy in school. Parents and carers agree. Pupils display a good sense of how to stay safe, and are knowledgeable for their age about risk and danger.
- Most pupils have a good grasp of the different forms of bullying and name-calling that could occur. The very few recorded instances of bullying have been dealt with effectively by the school. Pupils say they are confident that staff will quickly resolve any concerns.
- In lessons where the work is stimulating and engaging pupils display positive attitudes and are keen to learn. However, in lessons where learning is not made interesting enough, the off-task chatter of those who are not fully engaged can distract the learning of others.
- Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual at the start of the day. Pupils are well cared for in the breakfast club and after-school sandwich club.
- Arrangements to support children whose needs are complex and make them potentially vulnerable are effective. This includes the good use of specialist external agencies. Parents and carers appreciate the good quality of care that the school provides.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The governing body has taken decisive action to improve the quality of leadership and management of the school. As a result, leadership and management are currently in transition. The acting headteacher has made a positive start in his first term in post. Staff morale has been raised and leadership roles and responsibilities are being clarified. With good contributions from the local authority, there is now a more realistic evaluation of the school's performance. This gives the school sufficient capacity to improve.
- Checks on the quality of teaching through lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work

are not robust enough. Pupils make uneven progress because specific weaknesses in teaching are not clearly identified and tackled with enough rigour.

- The links between the targets set for teachers to improve their work and the training opportunities to help them improve have not been close enough. The targets set for staff are not always specific enough to judge whether or not they have been met. A more rigorous system for assessing pupils' progress and checking the impact of teaching has recently been introduced.
- Several staff have recently been appointed to senior and middle leadership roles but do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities. They do not, as yet, have the skills necessary to check the quality of teaching in their areas with enough rigour to identify and tackle weaknesses securely.
- Outstanding leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the strong links established with parents and carers have a positive impact on the development of children's academic and social skills.
- The teaching and learning programmes have been revised to provide pupils with a more interesting variety of learning experiences. These programmes are enhanced through a good number of sports, musical and arts activities. Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted well through both the taught subjects and through assemblies where pupils sing together enthusiastically, worship and are encouraged to reflect on moral issues.
- Parents and carers commented favourably that help for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs makes sure they are able to experience all learning opportunities available. This reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and the successful elimination of discrimination.
- The local authority has provided valuable support to the governing body through the period of transition.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are highly committed to the school and to securing the best possible outcomes for pupils and their families. They are vigilant in ensuring that policies are up-to-date and finances are managed well. The governing body initiated an external consultancy review to obtain an accurate picture of pupils' performance and the quality of teaching. This led directly to action to improve the quality of leadership and management, and to a strategic plan to improve the school's performance. At present the school does not have robust enough arrangements to ensure that pay and promotion are linked to teacher's skills in ensuring pupils make good progress. Governors have received assurances that funding through the pupil premium has been used for the intended purposes, but there is no written plan for the use of this resource. The school has no strategy for evaluating of the impact on this funding on pupils' progress. The school is now better placed to remedy these weaknesses. Governors' training is relevant and up to date, for example in ensuring that the school meets all safeguarding requirements.

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	120229
Local authority	Rutland
Inspection number	403431

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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugo Spiegl
Headteacher	Ashley Scott (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2008
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