

The Mareham-le-Fen Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Mareham-le-Fen, Boston, PE22 7QB

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2014

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		Require improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few pupils consistently make good progress and attain as well as might be expected in English or mathematics.
- Effective support is not always provided for pupils who are at risk of underachieving, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and low attaining pupils.
- Attendance is not consistently good enough and too many pupils still miss valuable learning time.
- In some lessons, pupils lose concentration and their behaviour deteriorates because activities are too hard or too easy.
- There are too many classes where teaching is not yet consistently good. Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding, use questioning effectively or make the best use of teaching assistants.
- Subject leaders are not fully involved in monitoring pupils' progress and supporting them in the classrooms. There are insufficient opportunities for teachers to share good practice.
- Leaders and governors have not yet ensured enough improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards are improving and there is some good progress across the school this year.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The range of experiences at school contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of outside visits and out-of-school activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, four of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, an additional governor, the local authority education adviser, the literacy and numeracy leaders and a group of pupils.
- The inspector took account of the 25 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 14 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector examined a range of evidence, including the school's analysis of its own performance and resulting development plan, the systems to track pupils' progress and records relating to behaviour and attendance. He also looked at records of lesson observations by senior leaders, staff performance information, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work

Inspection team

Stephen Walker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is housed in a Victorian building which has been extensively refurbished and extended.
- Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is organised through the Reception class which is sometimes taught with the mixed-aged class in Years 1/2. There are also mixed-aged classes in Years 3/4 and Years 5/6.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A very small number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those with a parent in the armed forces and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Many of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and a small number of pupils have speech, language and communication needs.
- The school has too few pupils to allow comparison with the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There has been a higher than usual staff absence over the last two years, mainly due to illness.
- The school operates a daily breakfast club.
- The Chair of Governors and a number of governors were newly selected in December 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is good or better by making sure that all teachers:
 - check pupils' progress during lessons to ensure that they understand the work and how to complete their tasks
 - use questioning more effectively to engage pupils, confirm that they understand and challenge them in their learning
 - provide activities that are neither too hard or too easy and so engage all pupils and help them maintain concentration
 - use teaching assistants more effectively to support pupils' learning, both within the classroom and when they are working with small groups.
- Accelerate progress and raise the attainment of pupils across the school, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - providing timely and effective additional support for all pupils at risk of underachieving, including lower-attaining pupils and those identified with special educational needs
 - increasing pupils' progress and confidence in reading and writing, and in understanding and applying their number skills in mathematical calculations
 - ensuring that all pupils are making good progress towards their new attainment targets.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and governors by ensuring that:
 - there are more opportunities for improving teaching through coaching and sharing good practice, both within and beyond the school.
 - training is available so that subject leaders can be more effective in their supporting and monitoring roles
 - the school works more closely with parents and carers to improve the attendance of some pupils

- governors and senior leaders rigorously monitor the effectiveness of key decisions and actions to ensure that these are quickly leading to improvements in teaching and achievement.
- 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 requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because their progress is not consistently good and they have not attained as well as might be expected, particularly in mathematics and writing. Although there are signs of better progress this year, these signs have been insufficient to demonstrate that this good progress is sustained.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 has not been good enough to build on the sound start made in the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes and to ensure pupils reach broadly average standards at the end of Year 6. There was a dip in performance last year in Year 6, particularly of low-attaining pupils. Not enough pupils made expected progress from their average starting points and too few made more than the expected progress.
- Pupils' skills and confidence in reading and writing are not being consistently developed across the school. Similarly, key skills in numeracy are sometimes weak and some pupils have difficulties with calculations in mathematics. Pupils are generally making better progress in reading this year, although this has not always been the case in the past.
- The school is making greater use of the systems for tracking pupils' progress and providing better support for underachieving pupils. However, some teachers still do not identify underachieving pupils quickly enough or give them fully effective additional support in the areas where they have weaknesses.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their peers. A small number of pupils supported at school action plus underachieved last year because of their specific learning difficulties. More pupils are making better progress this year due to effective work from other adults which helps them overcome barriers to learning.
- There are clear signs of better progress across the school this year, which reflect the school's drive to raise achievement and make up for some underachievement in the past. Recent testing in Year 6 suggests that most pupils are on track to gain at least Level 4 in English and mathematics, and an increasing number are in line to gain Level 5, which would represent good progress from their Key Stage 1 starting points.
- Pupils have targets set for their attainment but these have not been sufficiently challenging in the past to help them aim for good progress and make up for previous underachievement. More demanding targets have been set recently for all pupils, although it is too early to assess the full impact of this change on pupils' progress.
- The school is using additional funding effectively to support individual pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. Money is allocated for additional help in reading, writing and mathematics, which is supporting improvements in pupils' attainment and progress. As numbers are very small, it is not possible to comment further on these pupils' attainment and progress without identifying individuals.
- The school has been active in improving pupils' progress in mathematics. There is a more structured course across the school with a greater emphasis on problem solving within more practical situations. Pupils benefit from daily mathematics lessons and the opportunity to work in small groups with pupils of similar abilities.

- Reading is now a key priority and pupils are encouraged to read at home and in school each day. The school is using a more structured approach to teaching phonics (the sounds represented by letters) across the school. The emphasis on speaking and listening, as well as more guidance being provided for written work, is supporting the improvement in pupils' language and writing skills.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there have been improvements in teaching, it varies too much across the school and there are still too many lessons where teaching requires improvement. During the inspection, there was insufficient evidence of good or better teaching, based on pupils' progress in lessons and in their books.
- Some pupils are not making enough progress because they are waiting for the teacher to help them with their work. This is often because they have not understood what they are being taught and the teacher has not checked that they understand how to complete their work successfully.
- Not enough teachers use information about what pupils already know to set work at the right level. Work is often too easy for some pupils and too hard for others. As a result, pupils lose concentration after they complete the tasks while others become disengaged because they are not able to complete the work.
- Not enough teachers are using questioning well to engage all pupils in their learning and to check their understanding. The questions are too frequently targeted at a few pupils in the class who know the answers and do not challenge and extend the thinking of others.
- Not all teachers are using teaching assistants effectively to support the pupils who require additional help with their work. Teaching assistants sometimes support only a few pupils and their support is not always targeted enough at pupils who have weaknesses in particular areas. The teaching assistants in the Reception class do not have sufficient guidance from the teachers about providing a range of activities, both led by the staff or chosen by the children, when they take responsibility for the teaching.
- In lessons where pupils make good progress, teachers prepare a range of well-planned activities which fully engage the pupils and allow them to take some responsibility for their own learning. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils made good progress when planning for their poem on animals. Pupils worked well in groups to discuss suitable adjectives and then were fully focused when the teacher showed examples of poems to the whole class. The teacher skilfully used questioning to check pupils' understanding and also to encourage them to apply and extend their knowledge.
- Teachers have addressed the inconsistency of marking which was identified in the previous report. There are now some good examples of marking with clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their work as well opportunities being provided for them to respond to their teacher's comments.
- Some teachers have developed attractive displays in their classrooms which provide a stimulating environment for learning. Their display of pupils' work provides opportunities to celebrate good work, support learning during lessons and provide examples of expected levels of work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils **require improvement**

- Attendance was below average last year. The school is active in reducing persistent absences and rewarding good attendance. The Breakfast Club is supporting better attendance for some pupils and there are signs of improved attendance overall this year. However, too many pupils still miss valuable learning time because of absence.
- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In lessons, some pupils lose concentration and become restless when they are not fully engaged by the work. However, most pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. Some pupils still require support in developing better attitudes to learning so that they become more confident to work on their own without constant guidance.
- Pupils generally get on well with each other and feel valued in the family atmosphere of this village school. They demonstrate good manners and show respect to adults and other pupils. Pupils adhere to the regulations regarding uniform and ensure that there is no litter in the school grounds.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Governors make sure that the arrangements for safeguarding meet current national requirements and underpin the school's caring approach.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in the school. Most parents confirm that their children are well looked after at the school and most pupils said that they enjoyed coming to school. Senior pupils appreciate the various opportunities to look after the younger children.
- There are very few instances of bullying. Pupils, parents and carers say that any unkind behaviour such as name-calling is usually dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils develop a satisfactory awareness of the different forms of bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sexual orientation, gender, race and disability.
- Pupils have an adequate awareness of issues relating to safety and know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations such as using the internet, crossing the road and talking with strangers.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leaders have not yet ensured sustained improvement in the quality of teaching or pupils' progress. The school development plan, although based on an accurate assessment of the school, has not led to enough improvement.
- The school is not encouraging enough sharing of good teaching from within and beyond the school. Leaders are now carrying out more regular lesson observations with a stronger focus on pupils' progress and identifying areas for development. However, there has not been sufficient analysis in the past of the areas where teachers require professional support so that coaching can be put in place.
- Subject leaders have taken on more responsibility and are now becoming more involved in whole-school improvement than in the past by providing guidance to teachers. However, they are not yet fully involved in monitoring pupils' progress across the school or providing support in all classrooms to improve the quality of teaching.

- Although leaders have successfully ensured that there is no discrimination within the school, there is still work to be done to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to make the same good progress.
- The headteacher is providing clear leadership which has already brought improvement in some respects. The revised system for setting performance targets for teachers has been more demanding so that they are now held fully accountable for the progress of their pupils. All teachers now have a target for pupils' progress as well as a target which focuses on agreed areas for improvement in their teaching.
- The curriculum now has a greater focus on English and mathematics as well as using topics imaginatively across the other subject areas. A wide range of outside visits and out-of-school activities increases pupils' enjoyment and experience of school. The range of experiences, including regular assemblies, contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Primary school sports funding has enabled the pupils to benefit from a sports coach and additional sporting activities. There is a clear emphasis on developing more healthy lifestyles and better physical well-being for the pupils but it is too early to evaluate the impact of the additional funding for sport.
- The school is well supported by the local authority which works closely with the school. The education adviser has been involved in helping the headteacher with long-term planning and developing strategies to improve the quality of teaching. Good transition arrangements with local secondary schools ensure that pupils are well prepared for their new schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A number of governors are newly appointed and are therefore developing their awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher has ensured that they have an accurate view on pupils' achievement compared with schools locally and nationally. However, they do not have an accurate enough view of the quality of teaching in the school so that they can make confident decisions on pay rises and promotion. Governors effectively oversaw some financial cuts last year and ensured that the school achieved a balanced budget. Governors have not yet received enough professional training to completely fulfil their role. They acknowledge that they could be more active in evaluating and monitoring the success of key decisions and actions in the school.

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	120576
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	430714

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	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Phoenix
Headteacher	Avril Moore
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2012
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